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Standard
AUGUST 30, 2004
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The Kerry Wars

Matthew Continetti
Fred Barnes
Andrew Ferguson
William Kristol

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Tailgunner John

Speaking at the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Cincinnati early last week, President Bush announced a gradual, multiyear redeployment of approximately 70,000 U.S. troops now stationed in Europe and on the Korean peninsula. Had it been raining outside, the Kerry campaign would no doubt immediately have criticized Bush for *that*, as well.

In no time flat, tireless Kerry surrogate Wesley Clark was hustled onto a "teleconference call" so he could tell reporters that the president's new policy was "dangerous" and would "significantly undermine U.S. national security." Press releases to that effect issued forth from Democratic offices everywhere. Richard Holbrooke slithered over to NPR and elegantly recapitulated its audience's foreign policy prejudices: Bush's willingness to "turn our backs on our traditional allies in Europe and Asia" is "quite extraordinary," he sighed.

And then came Sen. Kerry himself, who, at his own subsequent VFW appearance, told the assembled vets that the president's "vaguely stated" and "hastily announced" troop deployment plan cannot help the war on terror, cannot help U.S. military personnel and their families, and cannot help but alarm our allies. "For example," Kerry asked, "why are we unilaterally withdrawing 12,000 troops from the Korean Peninsula at the very time we are negotiating with North Korea—a country that really has nuclear weapons?"

THE SCRAPBOOK notes the extraordinary cynicism embodied by this latest Team Kerry attack theme. Barely two weeks before the Democratic party decided that any reduced U.S. deployment anywhere in the world was a terrible idea, John Kerry himself, on August 1, was telling George Stephanopoulos on ABC that as president he intended to effect a "significant, enormous reduction in the level of troops" in Iraq, and hoped he might be able to achieve a similar result "elsewhere in the world"—perhaps "in the Korean peninsula" and also "in Europe." Moreover—and even more explicitly—Kerry had told a press gaggle in New York back in April that "the overall effort of a president right now ought to be really to try to find ways to reduce the overexposure, in a sense, of America's commitments. A proper approach to the Korean peninsula, for instance, should include the deployment of troops, the unresolved issues of the 1950s and ultimately, hopefully, could result in the reduction of American presence, ultimately."

Whatever. It now develops that Bush agrees with all this. So it now develops that all this is terribly, terribly wrong.

THE SCRAPBOOK further notes Kerry's increasing tendency toward . . . well, toward what supporters of Sen. Kerry usually call "McCarthyism." At the beginning of his VFW remarks last week, Kerry told his audience, "As a fellow veteran, I can proudly say that there is one title that is more important than all, and that is 'patriot.' You have all earned that title and I am proud to stand with you today."

Which would seem to suggest that a certain incumbent Republican president hasn't earned the right to call himself a patriot. Wouldn't it? ♦

The Meaning of the Word 'Incompletely'

The August 12 *New York Times* had a front-page story by Jennifer Steinhauer about former mayor Rudolph Giuliani's dogged efforts on behalf of the Bush campaign. The phenomenon is "in many ways quite remarkable," Steinhauer observed, given Giuliani's "often ambivalent relationship" with Bush personally and with the Republican party generally. By way of example, she pointed out that "in 2000, Mr. Giuliani supported John McCain in the [New York] Republican primary, infuriating the Bush team and breaking from most Republicans in the state."

Oddly enough, though Ms. Steinhauer's error here could hardly have been simpler or more obvious, the *Times* didn't get around to publishing a "correction" until five full days later. And even then, it did so grudgingly—and with its fingers crossed:

> A front-page article on Thursday about Rudoph W. Giuliani's campaigning on behalf of President Bush described his role in the 2000 election incompletely. While Mr. Giuliani, who was then mayor of New York, expressed support for Senator John McCain's candidacy in the Republican primaries, he ultimately endorsed Mr. Bush.

Paired with Steinhauer's original story, this, of course, makes it sound as though Giuliani did back McCain early on, at least through the New York primary, and only later endorsed Bush once the nominating contest was essentially all wrapped up.

The *Times* has described Ms. Steinhauer's mistake incompletely, however.

Fact: New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani, though he had nice things to say about John McCain at various times throughout the 2000 campaign, vigorously endorsed George W. Bush for president on October 1, 1999, more than five months in advance of the New York State Republican primary. ♦

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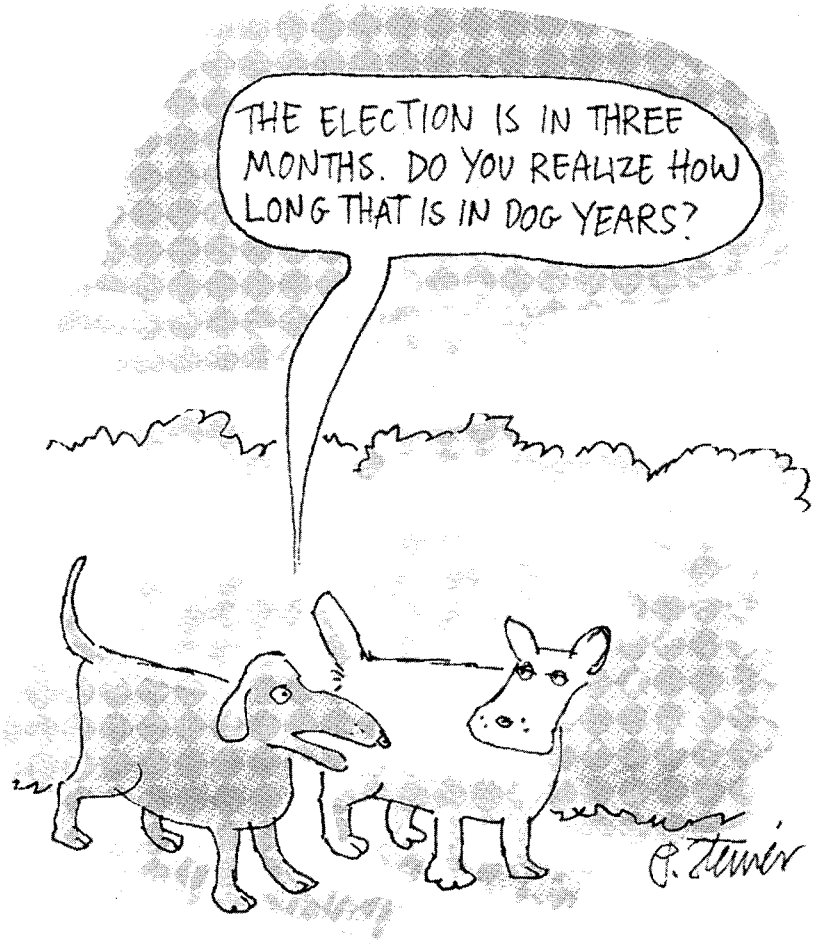

No Eng Lang Exp Nec

"Like journalism?" That's the oddly phrased question they've lately got posted on the *Yahoo!News* website. Turns out it's a help-wanted posting by the *Yahoo!News* folks themselves, which may help explain why the damn thing's practically invisible to the human eye, pushed down well below the scroll-bar horizon, and printed in agate type to boot. Our guess? It's just for show; they probably only hire from within the tribe.

Besides which, you don't have the language skills.

Yahoo!News's "like journalism" link leads would-be applicants to a notice indicating that "we have openings in the following areas," the first of which involves "content producers." And what exactly is a "content producer," you ask? *Yahoo!News* has the answer:

> *Yahoo!* Content Producers . . . utilize project management, marketing and strategic creative skills—as well as industry and domain knowledge—to identify and drive the usage and programming of, you guessed it, content. Not only do they manage the development and day-to-day appearance of *Yahoo!* properties, but they also participate in product development and engage partners to drive content to all of our consumer and business-facing product and services. Content Producers are visionaries and understand how to leverage technologies that will best meet the needs of our users.

Which is sort of "like journalism," apparently. ♦

Less Like Journalism

Reporting on the time-lapse resignation recently announced by New Jersey governor James E. McGreevey, an anonymous content producer for *Aljazeera.com* notes that a "few days ago we were all stuck with" McGreevey's puzzling suggestion that his "ability to govern" had been undermined by a homosexual blackmail threat. Now, though, freelance "Foreign Policy/Intelligence Columnist Andy Martin" has managed to uncover "some secrets to this regards," and *Aljazeera.com*, leveraging technology to best meet the needs of its users, is eager to broadcast Mr. Martin's discoveries to the wider world.

Guess what? "McGreevey's dilemma is not a gay sex scandal. It is an Israeli intelligence operation gone sour." Oh.

McGreevey's purported blackmailer, Golan Cipel, you see, "was a junior Mossad case officer" who lured McGreevey into a sexual relationship in order to, um, "penetrate New Jersey's homeland defenses." Given the "barely suppressed anger" of U.S. officials since 9/11 over "the fact Israeli intelligence knew about the hijackers and said nothing," normal information-sharing practices have been suspended between the two countries and Jerusalem has been forced to find, um, a "back door way of spying on anti-terror preparations in the New York-New Jersey area, and possibly nationally."

Incidentally: *Aljazeera.com*'s otherwise entirely straight-faced account of this dastardly Jewish plot is posted on a regular section of its site headlined "Conspiracy Theories." Pan-Arab Postmodernism, you might call it. ♦

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Casual

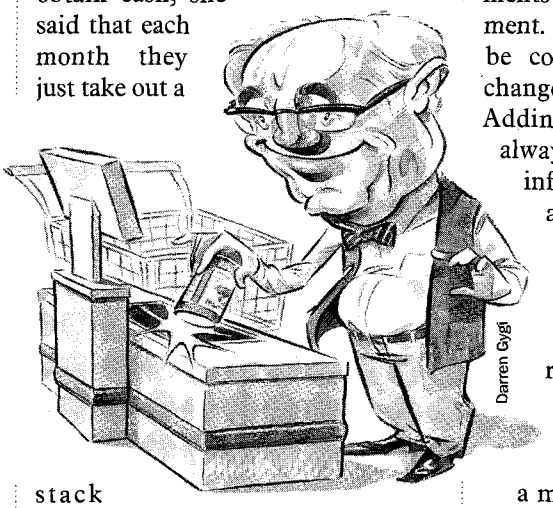
They Said I Was Low-Tech . . .

Yesterday, to avoid the long lines, I used the recently installed automated system and checked myself out of my local supermarket: two pints of Häagen-Dazs frozen coffee yogurt, three rolls of white necessary paper, a package of six Bays English muffins, a small bag of vine-ripened tomatoes. Following instructions, I used my preferred customers card, I scanned each item, I paid in cash, I took my change. After bagging my groceries, I moved on out, smartly. One small step for man, I felt, one large step for Joseph Epstein.

I'm always pleased when I am able to avail myself of the most recent bit of new technology that life throws up nowadays. It makes me feel I'm still in the game. I have a number of friends, contemporaries, who dropped out some while ago, most at the stage of home computers, which they decided they didn't really need. Why did they need email when the phone was at hand; word-processing when a typewriter had served them so well over the years; Google when they lived so close to a library? Who needs it, they exclaimed?

I fear that they do—that we all do. I think that something more is at stake than the greater efficiency that technological change sometimes brings about. Not, to be sure, that all of it is absolutely required; I, for one, don't need a remote at my bedside to put the lights on in the bathroom should I wake in the middle of the night. I feel telephone technology generally is vastly overdone, and I've never met a telephone menu I didn't dislike. But a lot of these gadgets have made life easier, a tad happier, a bit better. Bring 'em on, I say.

Some of us are selectively stymied by the fresh advents of the new high tech. I felt myself a wizard of my old VCR, then made a mistake and bought a higher quality, more complex one—with a voice that uttered instructions—that left me baffled. I have friends, a couple, retired physicians, who have a highly complex arrangement of multiple computers, yet have concluded that they cannot handle the relatively simple mechanics of ATM machines. When I asked the wife what they do to obtain cash, she said that each month they just take out a stack of money—the amount was not specified—and put it in a drawer, and use it as their own personal ATM.


Darren Gygi

Many people are born with a natural curiosity about how things work. I, alas, wasn't. My curiosity has always been restricted to how human beings work, not that I have been all that successful in satisfying it. I was not a boy who could make model planes; left alone with an X-acto blade, I would probably have greeted the digital age with many fewer digits. Nor could I lose myself in the intricacies of Lincoln Logs, an Erector Set, or test tubes and chemicals. When science became at all intricate, when it left the state of simple wonder, my mind departed the room. Several decades later, it has yet to return.

Yet I take great pride in being able to do simple tasks around our apartment. A few years ago, I changed all our bedroom and bathroom doorknobs. I discovered I have an eye for hanging pictures true. I've learned to replace batteries in my and my wife's wrist-watches, saving four or five bucks each time by being able to do so. I can handle very minor plumbing jobs. I have learned how to replace halogen bulbs. None of this qualifies me for being on a first-name basis with the crowd down at Home Depot, but I derive small but genuine satisfaction from doing such tasks.

Where I do often run into trouble is remembering from one season to another how to make minor adjustments on modestly high-tech equipment. At daylight savings time, I can be counted on to forget how to change the digital clock in my car. Adding software to my computer is always an adventure, one that not infrequently ends up in frustrated anger—"I sense rage," as the shrinks say—at my own ignorance.

"Man rides machine," wrote Emerson, who never had to ride any machine more complicated than a train. I doubt he would have felt the same if his car had broken down on a major thoroughfare owing to an electrical failure; or if he'd been rendered unable to write a sermon because his computer had gone down. The prig Thoreau, seeing us frustrated by technology, would probably have said, as it seemed to please him so much to say, "I told you so."

You won't find me plugged into an iPod or checking into the Mayo Clinic for the first cell-phone implant, but should you see me using the computer check-in at O'Hare or doing some other mildly high-tech operation you might note a certain smugness in my manner. Come a bit closer and you might hear me lightly singing, "you ain't nothin' but a houndog." They said I was low-tech, but that was just a lie.

Joseph Epstein

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The Big Oil Candidate

After reading "A Manchurian Remake" (Aug. 9), I want to thank John Podhoretz for saving me eight dollars. I enjoyed the original *Manchurian Candidate*, and was initially excited to see the updated version. But it sounds like they might as well have saved us the pretense and simply titled it *The Halliburton Swindle*.

As Podhoretz observes, such heavy-handedness can rob a movie of its satirical quality. In addition, there's nothing particularly clever or innovative about depicting an oil company that secretly manipulates American politics. Was this really the best Hollywood could do?

Peter Byrnes Jr.
Severna Park, MD

Hip-Hop Voters, Unite!

In "Getting Out the Phat Vote" (Aug. 9), Matt Labash paints a misleading picture of the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network. He suggests the network has failed to register its target demographic in significant numbers. But according to the *Economist*, the network has already registered more than one million young people. Contra Labash's sneering article, it appears that the hip-hop community's get-out-the-vote effort has been quite successful thus far.

Kyle Ballard
Hacienda Heights, CA

Party Polarization

Michael Robinson and Susan Ellis do a good job of debunking some myths about growing ideological polarization in the United States ("Purple America," Aug. 16/Aug. 23). But they miss, or at least understate, one very real phenomenon—an ideological realignment of the Democratic and Republican parties that has affected political elites, activists, and even rank-and-file voters.

At every level, the ideological differences between Democrats and Republicans are considerably greater than in the past. Liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats are both endangered species. Conservative areas of the country have been moving toward the Republican party, while liberal areas have been moving toward the Democratic party. As a result of this ideological realignment, there are fewer battleground states in presidential elections. In 1960 and 1976, every big state was a battleground. Today, California, New York, Texas, and Illinois (among other big states) are generally considered safe for one party or the other. In the House of Representatives, the number of districts that are evenly balanced between the two major parties has declined by almost a third since 1980. This is not simply a result of redistricting; almost all of the change has occurred between redistricting cycles.

While the American public is no more

polarized than it was 30 or 40 years ago, the two parties are *much* more polarized, and this shift has had profound consequences for American politics.

Alan Abramowitz
Atlanta, GA

That's *Our* Word

Tod Lindberg's "Husbands and Wives" (Aug. 2) has at last captured the "gay marriage" debate for The Weekly Standard. Like all such tempests in a teapot, it is a matter of semantics. To wit: Just what do straight and gay couples call themselves in polite society?

A recent exchange between National Public Radio's Steve Inskeep and a policeman's wife from suburban Ohio reflected Lindberg's argument nicely. When Inskeep asked the woman if she opposed gay marriage, she replied that she opposed the appropriation of the word "marriage" most of all. "I'm just opposed to changing this whole definition of marriage," she said. "Call it something else. You know, do what you want. That's fine. But I just don't want it forced upon me. I just feel like [gay couples] should have their own word."

For many people, indeed, the essence of the gay marriage debate is a question of language and semantics, as Lindberg's essay trenchantly noted.

William O'Neill
Chicago, IL

Not Deployed in 1990s?

William Kristol's excellent editorial "The 9/10 Democrats" (July 19) cites John Kerry's comment that the 1990s were a decade when "young Americans were not deployed" in military operations abroad.

How quickly the Massachusetts senator forgets that hundreds of thousands of American servicemen were deployed to Southwest Asia in 1990, Somalia in 1992, Haiti in 1994, Bosnia in 1995, and Kosovo in 1999. While less costly than Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the wars and missions of the 1990s entailed major sacrifices, too. Kerry should not overlook them so casually.

Kevin T. Carroll
Central Islip, NY

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Kerry's Band of Brothers

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother. *Henry V*

And in this journey, I am accompanied by an extraordinary band of brothers. . . . Our band of brothers doesn't march because of who we are as veterans, but because of what we learned as soldiers.
John Kerry's acceptance speech at the Democratic convention, July 29, 2004

John Kerry is entitled to appropriate a phrase from Shakespeare. He is entitled to ask us to place weight on the testimony of the band of brothers with whom he served in Vietnam. But he has a problem. A substantial number of Kerry's band of brothers—those who served at close quarters with him in Coastal Division 11 and Coastal Division 14 from late November 1968 to March 1969—oppose his candidacy for the presidency. What they "learned as soldiers" has led them to distrust—in many cases, deeply distrust—John Kerry.

This is not a trivial matter. It is as if Henry the Fifth, three decades later, in a (needless to say, anachronistically) democratic England, had cited his experiences at Agincourt as a large part of his claim to lead. And then Exeter, Westmoreland, and Bedford had shown up to challenge his bona fides. The Agincourt Vets for Truth might, for example, have accused Henry of ordering war crimes when he told Exeter to have "every soldier kill his prisoners! Give the words through." They might have cited the contemporaneous reaction of Fluellen: "Kill the poys and the luggage? 'Tis expressly against the law of arms." And like Shakespeare's audiences to this day, voters would have had to weigh Fluellen's charge against Henry's possible defense of himself.

No serious person thinks John Kerry was in any way a war criminal. Many believe that his service in Vietnam remains the most admirable chapter in his life. But upon returning from Vietnam, Kerry did say that he and his fellow soldiers had routinely committed war crimes. And it is this that chiefly explains his fellow veterans' disdain for Kerry. Their contempt does not rest primarily on what Kerry did or did not do in 1968 or 1969.

On April 22, 1971, John Kerry testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He claimed to speak not simply for himself. He claimed to speak for "a very much larger group of veterans in this country"—for his extended band of brothers, as it were. And he proceeded to describe in some detail the "crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command," crimes that "this country, in a sense, made them do"—this country, the United States, that had "los[t] her sense of morality."

John Kerry has never retracted the charge of war crimes. It is fair to hold him accountable for his testimony—but it is also up to each American to decide how much weight to give this, or any other, three-decade-old event. What was said or done during the Vietnam era may end up being relatively unimportant in determining how people vote in 2004. But the Vietnam War, and the antiwar movement, are relevant to understanding a possible Kerry presidency at least in this sense: It is clear from Kerry's subsequent career that his real band of brothers—his political band of brothers, his ideological band of brothers—are the antiwar activists with whom he marched in 1971.

John Kerry was hostile, to say the least, to the exercise of American power in 1971. He remained so for the next three decades. John Kerry was critical, to say the least, of America's claims to moral leadership as a nation in 1971. He has remained so ever since. More than any presidential candidate since George McGovern, John Kerry is a creature of the anti-Vietnam War movement. His entire public career makes clear that he was and is—using the term descriptively, not pejoratively—a McGovernite. The difference is that George McGovern acknowledged this. John Kerry doesn't.

Another difference is that McGovern had the decency not to tout his war medals. Nor did McGovern claim to be "reporting for duty" when he made his case for the presidency. By indulging in that gesture, Kerry turned a spotlight on his Vietnam-era actions and invited scrutiny he may come to regret. Kerry's attempt now to suppress this debate will not work. In effect, and without intending it, Kerry invited his fellow veterans to "bring it on." So they have.

—*William Kristol*

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The Bloody Shirt Is Back

Did you know John Kerry served in Vietnam?

BY FRED BARNES

THERE'S NEVER BEEN a presidential campaign like John Kerry's. Never has a presidential nominee made his own experience in a war the centerpiece of his campaign for the White House. In 1960, John F. Kennedy didn't hide his World War II record as commander of PT-109, but he didn't talk it up either. When asked about being a hero, he mocked the idea and said it stemmed from having his boat shot out from under him. John McCain's experience as a POW in Vietnam was well known when he ran for the Republican nomination in 2000. But he rarely mentioned it, except to note that his longest place of residence was Hanoi. Kerry is different. His speeches, TV ads, interviews, the entire Democratic convention—all have dwelled on his four months in Vietnam and the five medals he was awarded.

And there's still another unique aspect. Never has a presidential nominee run on the basis of his role in a war he *opposed*. Dwight Eisenhower, Teddy Roosevelt, Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, and the five ex-Union officers in the Civil War who became president benefited politically from their participation and leadership in a war. Most of them, in fact, were famous for their wartime service. Kerry, by contrast, became famous as a war protester, as the leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, who charged that war crimes were being committed by American troops in Vietnam on a daily basis. Now Kerry has stood the Vietnam issue on its head. He insists it's his war record that shows he would be a strong president.

Why is Kerry leaning so heavily on his performance in Vietnam? It's a bulwark against attacks on his weak record on defense and national security as a U.S. senator since 1985. In an era of terrorist attacks, his votes to cut intelligence spending, indeed his overall dovishness, are liabilities. So the theme of nearly every speaker at the Democratic convention in July was that Kerry's Vietnam service, not his Senate record, reflects the kind of president he would be. "I defended this country as a young man and I will defend it as president," Kerry declared.

The two convention speeches leading up to Kerry's were delivered by Vietnam vets, and during Kerry's speech, a group of his former Swift boat crewmates stood behind him. "I thought I was watching the VFW convention," quipped Larry Sabato, a political scientist at the University of Virginia. Former senator Max Cleland, a triple amputee, was quick to tell the delegates that Kerry had earned "a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts." Retired General Wesley Clark talked up Kerry's moments in combat. "John Kerry has heard the thump of enemy mortars," Clark said. "He's seen the flash of the tracers. . . . He proved his physical courage under fire."

Has a candidate's having heard "the thump" of mortars or seen the "flash of tracers" ever before been used as grounds for election? Not in recent memory anyway. Harry Truman was an artillery officer in World War I, but his campaign didn't highlight that in his tough election battle in 1948. "You didn't get Kennedy saying, 'I have served and I have shrapnel in me,'" says Fred Greenstein, a presidential scholar and professor emeritus at Princeton. "Kennedy was too classy a guy to say that." (A Kerry campaign commercial says Kerry still has shrapnel in his leg.) George Bush senior, *running for president in 1988 and* 1992, didn't discuss his World War II service in the Pacific. Nor did Eisenhower rely on his war experience. "He didn't have to say 'I know about war,'" says Greenstein. "Everybody knew he knew about war."

Truman, Kennedy, Bush, and Eisenhower stressed other issues. Truman thrashed the "do-nothing Congress." Kennedy deplored a "missile gap" and exuded optimism about America. Bush ran as Ronald Reagan's heir but "kinder and gentler." Eisenhower promised to go to Korea and to clean up the mess in Washington. Kerry, however, "has made his four months of military service a key part, a mantra, a touchstone," says Greenstein. Since 1904, when presidential candidates began active campaigning, Kerry "is probably distinctive in the extent to which he makes reference to it."

That's putting it mildly. Kerry's campaign is also distinctive in the modern political era in using his Vietnam record to shut down criticism. Vice President Dick Cheney zinged Kerry recently for advocating a "more sensitive war on terror." At a rally in Flint, Michigan, Kerry's running mate, John Edwards, accused Cheney of distorting Kerry's words. Then he added this: "He's talking about a man who still carries shrapnel in his body. He's talking about a man who spilled his blood for the United States of America." Democratic senator Tom Harkin went further, calling Cheney a "coward" for not having joined the military or served in Vietnam.

This tactic is not new. It's called "waving the bloody shirt" and was quite common in presidential campaigns in the post-Civil War years—but not since then. In those days, presidential nominees didn't campaign personally. But Republicans urged people to "vote the way you shot."

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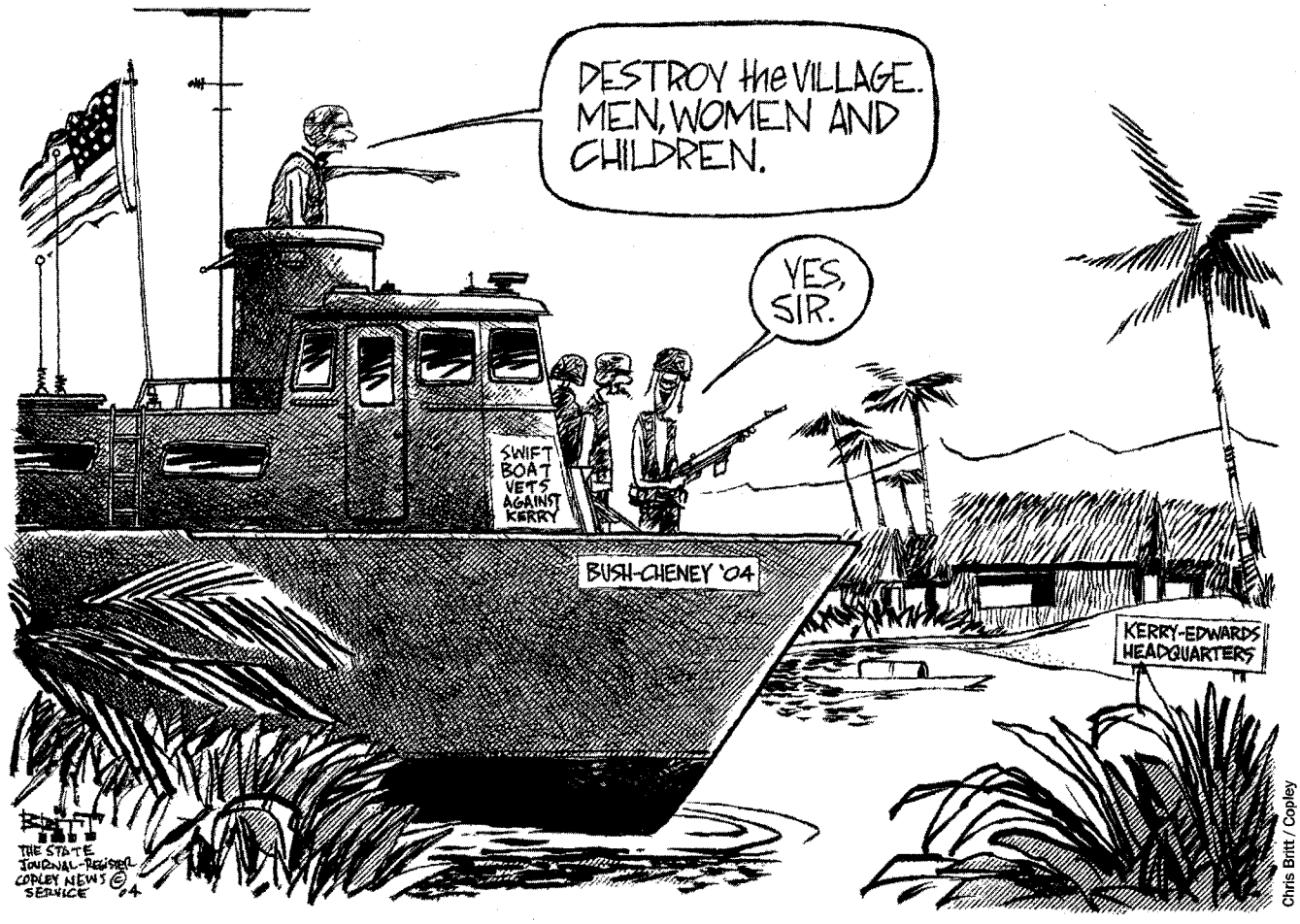
Presidential expert Al Felzenberg cites another Republican slogan: "Every [dead] Union soldier was downed by a Democrat." In 1868, Ulysses S. Grant's Democratic foe, Horatio Seymour, was accused of southern sympathies. Even when Democrats nominated General Winfield Scott Hancock in 1880, Republicans charged he represented "a Solid South against the soldiers and sailors of the patriotic North."

The Kerry campaign now treats President Bush the way Republicans dealt with Democratic presidential nominee Grover Cleveland in 1884. Republicans pointed out Cleveland hadn't served in the Civil War. At a Kerry campaign press conference last week, Clark characterized the two candidates this way: "One man volunteered to serve his country. He volunteered to go to Vietnam. He volunteered a third time to command a Swift boat in one of the most dangerous activities in the war. The other man scrambled and used his family's influence to get out of hearing a shot fired in anger."

There's a problem in comparing the Kerry and Bush war records. Kerry needs to play up his in an effort to show he would be a tough commander in chief. Meanwhile, Bush's record as a National Guard fighter pilot is not particularly relevant. He has been commander in chief for more than three years, allowing voters to judge him on his actual performance rather than on military records more than three decades old.

The Kerry fixation on his Vietnam record turns out to be more risky than expected. His claims about his war experience have become a matter for scrutiny, though not by the Bush reelection campaign as far as we know. Instead, a group called Swift Boat Veterans for Truth has charged Kerry with lying about his record in Vietnam or exaggerating it. The Kerry campaign can't dismiss the group as men who ducked Vietnam duty. The anti-Kerry veterans stayed in Vietnam for full 12-month tours, longer than Kerry did. Many were in the same unit as Kerry. Their criticism of Kerry is over specific incidents that require a specific response. Being forced to defend his war record wasn't part of Kerry's campaign plan.

Is Kerry's strategy working? We'll get an initial reading soon when polls measure whether the attacks by the Swift Boat Veterans, both on Kerry's war record and his antiwar protesting, have had an effect. The real test comes this fall when voters will be paying more attention and Kerry's Senate record on national security will be under discussion. Has Kerry's Vietnam episode inoculated him? Presidential historian Forrest McDonald doesn't think so. "He's grasping at straws," McDonald says. Maybe so. ♦



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Marching to November

The politics of chest-thumping.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

FOR THE PAST couple weeks Republican activists have bent themselves to the task of proving that John Kerry, who was awarded five medals during four months of service in the Vietnam war, isn't a war hero, and the marvelous intensity of their exertions started me thinking.

As normal Americans lose interest in politics, and as their moderating influence fades from the general conversation, politics has become increasingly the plaything of obsessives. And what obsessives bring to politics, unsurprisingly, are their own obsessions, rooted in the uneasiness and insecurities that we all share to one degree or another. Punditry may not be a branch of psychopathology—not yet, anyway—but in some cases the most penetrating political analysis should follow the method of Bertie Wooster's valet, Jeeves: "The first essential is to study the psychology of the individual." Both Bertie and Jeeves, by the way, were paleocons.

It's amazing, the mysteries that can be illuminated by the psychological approach. Consider the recent self-presentation of the Democratic party. The party as we know it today was founded in 1972, when its old guard was swept away by the McGovernite revolution. The party's purpose and image were unambiguous. It was the peace party. And it remained such through the rest of the Cold War, even when—as in '72—it nominated a decorated war hero as its presidential candidate.

Over the years a few Democrats have objected to this reputation, of course, and the cleverest polemicists have even flipped their party's peacenik image against their opponents in the war party. Beginning in the 1980s, Democrats have delighted in scolding various Republicans as "war wimps"—public officials and think-tank types who advocate the use of military force and who did not themselves serve in the military.

On the kindest interpretation, the "war wimps" charge is based on a non sequitur, linking two things that have nothing to do with each other (military service as a young man, on the one hand, and sound judgment in geopolitical affairs, on the other). On a not-so-kind interpretation, it entails the repudiation of a crucial democratic principle: civilian control of the military. After all, if only men with military experience are justified in ordering other military men into combat, then national security has been ceded to an unsupervised warrior class—something that Democrats used to warn us against. And besides, by this definition, several of the country's wartime presidents, including Democrats Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, were war wimps.

As an argument, then, the war-wimp charge is incoherent, even illiberal. It's also inexplicable—until you realize that it isn't an argument at all, but a sign of severe psychological frustration, a means by which a desperate Democrat might overcompensate for years of being called a peacenik wimp. The same frustration led directly to the bizarre outcome of this year's primaries, when Democrats nominated a charmless and undistinguished candidate whom no one seemed to like very much and who displays a dazzling lack of the most elementary political skills, such as being able to deliver a speech without boring half his audience into paralytic catatonia.

But he had a single qualification that overwhelmed his many shortcomings. John Kerry is a war hero. John Kerry fought Charlie in 'Nam. John Kerry wore the brown bar and ate the chop-chop. John Kerry was in the shit and came out alive. (Democrats can speak the lingo too, you know.) So who you calling a "peace party" now? *Huh?*

Hence the Boston convention—a celebration of hairy-chested militarism that would have made Generalissimo Franco blush. A press release outlined a theme for each night of the convention. Monday: "The Kerry-Edwards plan to make America stronger . . . " Tuesday: "John Kerry's lifetime of strength . . . " Wednesday: "Creating a stronger, more secure America . . . " If you listened close you heard Sousa marches tucked between the rap music interludes. On Thursday night, there was the Parade of Generals and Admirals, each warrior marching across the convention stage to riotous applause. (They had the decency to wear civilian clothes.) Finally, the war hero himself appeared, greeted by a phalanx of former soldiers. He climbed the stage and promptly gave a military salute. He said he was "reporting for duty." Juntas have taken power with less pomp.

The vets in formation, the generals strutting the stage, the teary-eyed tributes to those fallen in battle, even the nominee himself—it is difficult to explain any of this martial bluster except as a function of psychological necessity: Democrats need to reassure themselves they aren't wimps.

But now Republican activists are forcing on the campaign obsessions of their own—almost a mirror image of the Democrats' desperate overcompensation. The dissonance and frustration this year's election rouses in the mind of the dedicated Republican cannot be underestimated. Conservatives actually do revere the military,

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without reservation. It is not their inclination to debunk combat heroes. Some Republicans, when they drink enough beer, really do wonder whether civilian control of the military is such a great idea. For them, it was never plausible that our boys in Vietnam had "personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads . . . cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians," and so on, as young John Kerry testified they did.

Yet in 2004, Republicans find themselves supporting a candidate, George W. Bush, with a slender and ambiguous military record against a man whose combat heroism has never (until now) been disputed. Further—and here we'll let slip a thinly disguised secret—Republicans are supporting a candidate that relatively few of them find personally or politically appealing. This is not the choice Republicans are supposed to be faced with. The 1990s were far better. In those days the Democrats did the proper thing, nominating a draft-dodger to run against George H.W. Bush, who was the youngest combat pilot in the Pacific theater in World War II, and then later, in 1996, against Bob Dole, who left a portion of his body on the beach at Anzio.

Republicans have no such luck this time, and so they scramble to reassure themselves that they nevertheless are doing the right thing, voting against a war hero. The simplest way to do this is to convince themselves that the war hero isn't really a war hero. If sufficient doubt about Kerry's record can be raised, we can vote for Bush without remorse. But the calculations are transparently desperate. Reading some of the anti-Kerry attacks over the last several weeks, you might conclude that this is the new conservative position: A veteran who volunteered for combat duty, spent four months under fire in Vietnam, and then exaggerated a bit so he could go home early is the inferior, morally and otherwise, of a man who had his father pull strings so he wouldn't have to go to Vietnam in the first place.

Needless to say, the proposition will be a hard sell in those dim and tiny reaches of the electorate where voters have yet to make up their minds. Indeed, it's far more likely that moderates and fence-sitters will be disgusted by the lengths to which partisans will go to discredit a rival. But this anti-Kerry campaign is not designed to win undecided votes. It's designed to reassure uneasy minds. ♦

Grappling with Title IX

Gender politics and the Olympics.

BY DAN GABLE

EVERY FOURTH SUMMER, athletes seek to remind us that the Olympic ideal soars above politics and brings the world together through the nobility of sport. Of course, that's not always how it works out. During my years as an Olympic wrestler, the shadow of the Cold War loomed over the games. Grappling with Soviet wrestlers, many people thought, epitomized a larger, worldwide struggle.

In this Olympiad, the achievements and aspirations of some of our finest athletes are being tarnished by hostilities of a different sort—American gender politics.

That's because, for some people, the competition serves as a ready-made opportunity to praise Title IX, the federal anti-discrimination law that has acquired an ideological choke hold on amateur sport.

For men, collegiate teams have been cut across the board, decreasing the talent pool in sports like swimming, wrestling, track and field, and gymnastics. On the women's side, meanwhile, nearly every accomplishment is chalked up to Title IX, even though the law played no role in many of those sterling athletic careers.

A recent presidential commission heard testimony detailing the damage done to college sports by Title IX regulations. UCLA's men's swimming team, whose members have won scores of Olympic medals, is gone. The University of Miami's diving program, which produced Greg Louganis, has also been axed. Kent State Hockey? It is no more. UMass gymnastics has had to hang 'em up. Consider what happened to wrestler Kevin Bracken, a member of the 2000 Olympic team. His senior year, Illinois State University, rather than add a women's program, dropped its wrestling team.

Because of the unreasonable way federal athletics law is enforced, school administrators fear that only by making their rosters proportional to the gender breakdown of the student body can they be safe from government investigation and trial lawyers.

Proportionality may sound harmless, but it isn't. Imagine that at the recent opening ceremonies of the Athens Games, the 282 men and 263 women who marched out under the American flag had had the current Title IX rules applied on the spot. To make the team "proportional" (the U.S. population is 52 percent women, 48 percent men) an entire team of male athletes would have been herded aside and asked to take a seat in the stands.

That terrible ritual, complete with tears and disbelief, is playing out on college campuses year after year. At

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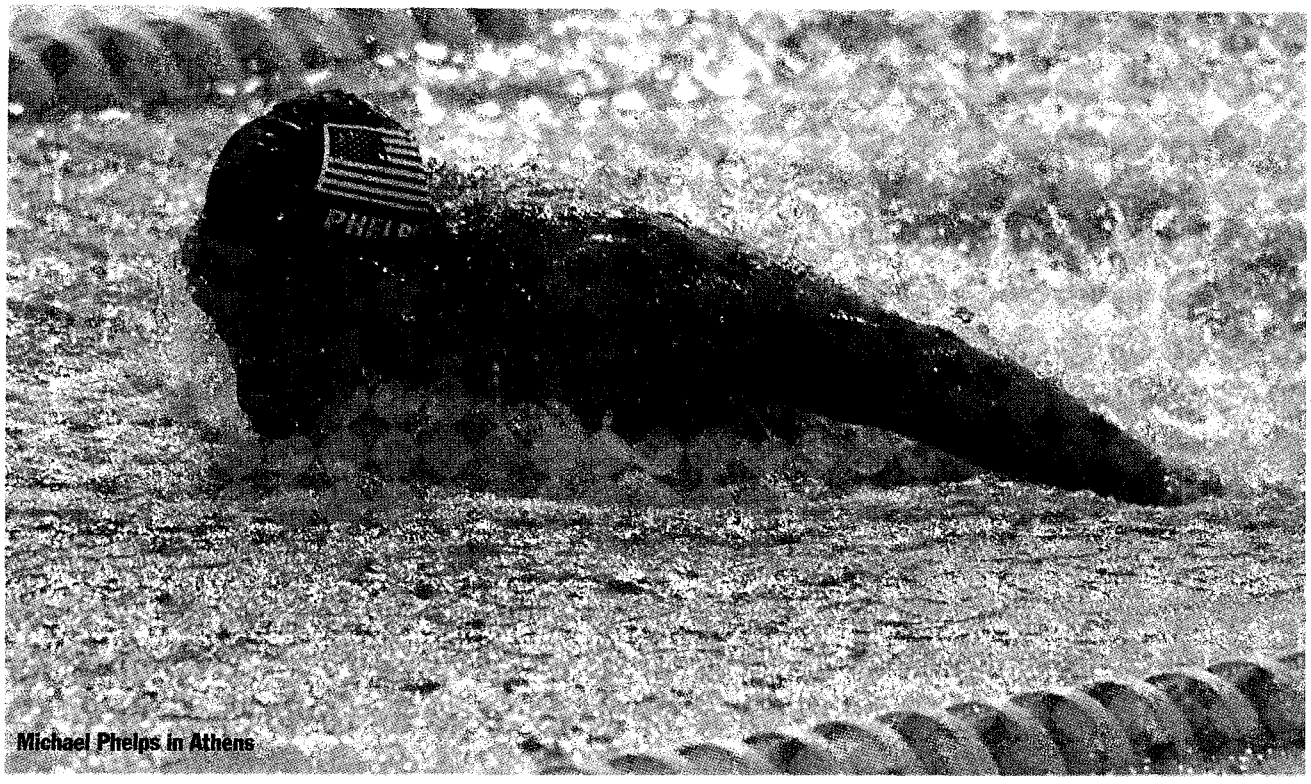
Michael Phelps in Athens

Southern Methodist University, just last month, two dozen athletes on the men's track team were told to hand in their spikes for good.

A broad majority of the presidential commissioners want commonsense reform to prevent this spiteful practice. One provision already in Title IX says that schools can comply by seeing to it that the number and size of sports programs reflect the level of interest. So, the commission suggested, we should find ways to measure how interested men and women are in athletics. For this the commissioners were greeted with accusations of sexism, even though most of them were women themselves.

You would be hard pressed to find anyone in this country more devoted to the athletic spirit and the opportunity to compete than college coaches. And yet, many of them, men and women alike, believe Title IX is in desperate need of repair. They believe deeply in the original intent of Title IX—equal opportunity for everyone—but they are concerned about the destruction it has brought to many fine sports programs.

The coaches are not that big on politics. We seldom know one another's favorite candidates. We don't have political action committees and probably haven't made many campaign contributions.

But on Title IX reform, the coaches, working together as the College Sports Council, have been met with a bare-knuckle Washington fight, filled with some of the most hostile language of the gender activist movement. And that, to be honest, has been the toughest part.

An article in the *Washington Post* called Title IX opponents "a bunch of sad sacks." Such sharp language, unfortunately, has everything to do with why the law is so slow to reform. Any elected official who stands up to make a principled argument that gender quotas have no place in a system of equal opportunity is sure to be called a sexist for their efforts.

The heart of the issue is the difference between fair opportunity and equal outcome. The coaches believe that there should be opportunities for all male and female athletes, no matter how many or how few show up to play. The gender activist groups are demanding we impose an athlete quota based on college enrollment, even if you have to eliminate male athletes just to make those numbers balance.

Nowhere else in our civic life would Americans tolerate a quota like the one imposed on college athletics. It is not done in collegiate dance, or engineering, or nursing, or even college enrollment, where the gender breakdown is 56 percent women to 44 percent men. Why no calls for proportionality in college enrollment?

Not only our current college programs, but our future Olympic teams will suffer, too, as the pools from which the United States recruits and develops its athletes and coaches are inexorably drained. The three sports that bring home the most Olympic medals for the United States—swimming, track, and wrestling—have been hit the hardest. Americans cannot expect continued dominance by their athletes abroad if they allow continued elimination of college teams at home.

There are fair-minded Americans, men and women alike, who care about preserving Title IX and applying it even-handedly. They are making a valid case and are offering real, workable solutions that will allow all athletes the same chance to compete. They deserve to be heard. Slandering them as sexist or ignorant is one of the cheapest, dirtiest forms of politics.

Surely we can all find some middle ground to restore common sense and fairness to the law. ♦

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Marriage at the Polls

Will gay-marriage initiatives give Bush a boost on November 2? BY MARK STRICHERZ

WHEN PHIL BURRESS goes home at night, his phones and doorbell ring long past suppertime. Burress is the chairman of the Ohio Campaign to Protect Marriage, a coalition seeking to put an initiative on the ballot in November that would amend the state's constitution to ban homosexual marriage altogether and domestic partnership benefits for public employees. He took the position in May, and ever since folks have been contacting him at all hours asking to get his petition forms. "I got a knock on the door at 8 the other night from a Muslim who said, 'We want you to help at our [mosque],'" he says wearily. "Everyone is running to get these things."

Burress exaggerates only a bit. From late May to August 3, his group collected 392,000 signatures—a figure initiative groups usually reach only after twice as much time. They needed to obtain signatures from more than 5 percent of registered voters in at least 44 of the state's 88 counties; they ended up getting enough in 79. By early September, they will likely collect another 100,000 signatures, because Ohio law allows groups to do so in the event that some petitions are thrown out. Most observers expect the measure will qualify.

If it does, 11 states will have marriage amendments on the ballot this November. Among them are four states expected to be competitive in the presidential race—Ohio, Michigan, Oregon, and Arkansas. Could the amendment fights in those four states affect the outcome of the presidential campaign? Although not conclusive, the evidence suggests that if there's a second Bush administration, Phil Burress may deserve an invitation to the White House.

Among most election experts, not to mention some Republican operatives, the notion that state ballot initiatives on gay marriage could tip the presidential race is considered fanciful. "With extensive get-out-the-vote efforts from both parties, I don't think these ballot initiatives in the states will make much difference," says analyst Charlie Cook. "If this were 1988, with Willie Horton and Boston Harbor, I could maybe see it, but this election is going to be about the economy, the war on terror, and the war in Iraq."

Perhaps, but recent history suggests otherwise. Since 1968 the "Social Issue" has been a major factor in helping Republicans win six of the last nine presidential elections. When Ben Wattenberg and Richard Scammon coined the term in their 1970 classic *The Real Majority*, the Social Issue comprised race, crime, and values. Although Bill Clinton helped diminish the importance of the first two, Democrats continue to stumble over values.

John Kerry is not unaware of this history. He has made a point of taking the same public stance on gay marriage as George W. Bush: He's against it. Despite his professed opposition, though, Kerry voted against the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996—an effort by Congress to prevent judges from imposing gay marriage in states that don't want it. A former Democratic pollster concedes the vote could be a vulnerability for Kerry. "It could if it was played up enough against him," says Ken Warren, who now teaches at St. Louis University.

According to a recent Gallup poll, gay marriage ranks near the bottom of voters' top 15 concerns. But that's unlikely to be the case in states with ballot measures on the issue. Ohio may be the state where it matters most. Ohioans have shown intense opposition to the possibility of legalizing homosexual marriage. According to an April poll by the *Columbus Dispatch*, 78 percent of Ohioans want to ban it—hence, the enthusiasm for Burress's petitions.

The same fervent opposition was evident in the August 3 primary in Missouri, which featured a state constitutional amendment defining marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman. This was the first vote on the issue in the country since the Massachusetts supreme court imposed gay marriage in that state, creating a high-profile national issue in the process. And the vote wasn't close. Almost 43 percent of the state's registered voters cast ballots, shattering the previous mark for a primary of 36.5 percent set in 1992. And the marriage amendment mobilized many of those voters. Nearly 40,000 more Missourians voted on the amendment (1,495,300) than in the gubernatorial primaries (one of which cost Democratic governor Bob Holden his job).

Even longtime observers of Missouri politics professed awe at the results. "I was expecting a turnout of 1 million, maybe," says David Webber, a professor of political science at the University of Missouri-Columbia, "but not 1.5 million." From those results Webber deduces that voters in Ohio could react similarly. Voters in both states lean Republican and are socially conservative. Many live in small towns and exurbs, don't belong to unions but do go to church, and tend to be older and working class. Not surprisingly, rejection of homosexual marriage runs deepest among this bloc. According to a late February study by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 45 percent of voters 65 years and older and 40 percent of voters with a high

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school degree or less said they would not vote for a candidate who supported gay marriage.

In Butler County, in rural southeastern Missouri, voters favored the amendment 8 to 1. According to state GOP spokesman Paul Sloca, in rural Missouri, "there are a lot of close-knit families. They can't even *comprehend* the idea of two men getting married." Cass County, an exurb south of Kansas City, favored the amendment by nearly 4 to 1. Indeed, although Cass County is a GOP stronghold, more voters there voted to ban gay marriage (20,264) than voted for Bush in the general election four years ago (20,113).

The results have not escaped the notice of Bush advisers. One aide acknowledges that Bush would be particularly helped in southern Ohio. "In the Cincinnati area, in the southwestern parts of the state, people are clearly worried that courts are defining this issue, that they're weakening marriage," he says. A March poll by the *Columbus Dispatch* backs up his assessment: It found 69 percent of respondents from southeastern Ohio supported an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, while only 55 percent from central Ohio did.

How many Ohioans will be energized by the marriage amendment is hard to say. University of Akron political scientist John Green estimates that the spike in turnout could be 4 to 5 percent, adding another 200,000 votes. That could be hugely significant. In 2000, Bush won Ohio by only 165,000 votes out of 4.7 million cast.

But while the numbers favor Bush in Ohio, other factors work against him in Oregon and Michigan. First, unemployment is higher there; as of July, the figures were 6.9 percent in Oregon and 6.5 percent in Michigan. Bush is trailing by 5 to 8 percentage points in each state, according to the latest polls. In those states, the economy is paramount.

Second, because both states lean Democratic, their voters view the Iraq War more negatively. "The biggest problem is Iraq," says Oregon pollster Tim Hibbitts. "In a different year [gay marriage] could have been a devastating issue, but voters are talking about the economy and Iraq."

However, political observers in those states don't discount the possible significance of the marriage amendments. Should the economy improve and the bad news from Iraq recede, voters there are more likely to make gay marriage a voting issue. "I would not be surprised by a 2 to 4 percent increase in turnout," says Kevin Mannix, chairman of the Oregon Republican party. Michigan pollster Ed Sarpolus sees a different dynamic at work: "The over-50 group is open to Bush on the civil union issue. We don't really know until Kerry stops focusing on commander in chief issues and starts talking in this state about health care, but [the opening] is there."

In Arkansas, Bush may not need an assist. He already leads Kerry there, and many political observers believe Bush will win regardless of the marriage amendment. Still, Cal Ledbetter, an emeritus professor of political science at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, estimates the gay marriage issue will draw 5,000 to 10,000 more voters to the polls, especially in the Republican-rich northwestern part of the state.

Where will the Kerry campaign stand on the various state ballot initiatives? There's been no comment. Publicly, Kerry favors banning gay and lesbian marriages at the state level while supporting domestic partnership benefits. The Ohio and Michigan measures don't just affirm traditional marriage—they also ban such benefits.

Still, opponents of the two marriage amendments aren't holding their breath for Kerry's support. Alan Melamed, campaign manager for Ohioans Protecting the Constitution, estimates his campaign would need $3.5 million to $5 million to have a chance of prevailing. "I haven't heard anything" from the Kerry campaign, he says, adding with a laugh: "But if they want to give us a check, we're more than happy to accept it." ♦

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The Party of Cloning

The Democrats embrace the gospel of stem cells.

BY ERIC COHEN

JOHN KERRY'S recent assertions about stem cell research are so obviously untrue and so easily refuted that he must on some level actually believe them—as only an ideologue can. He claims repeatedly that President Bush has "enacted a far-reaching ban on stem cell research"; in fact, the Bush administration provided over $200 million for stem cell research last year, including $25 million for embryonic stem cell research. He claims that stem cells will one day cure Alzheimer's disease, an ailment that uniquely terrifies the baby-boom generation. But leading scientists, including enthusiastic supporters of stem cell research, have made it clear that stem cells will not help treat Alzheimer's. Kerry claims that stem cell cures are "at our fingertips" and that "help is on the way," when in fact there has not been a single human trial of an embryonic stem cell therapy.

Unlike the war in Iraq, where Kerry maneuvers to play both sides, stem cells are an issue where he brooks no ambiguity. He is for progress; President Bush is against it. He will end suffering; President Bush will leave the sick to "look to the future with fear." As William Saletan noted in a recent piece in *Slate*, Kerry has made biomedical advance a religion, and stem cells are his gospel. Understanding how this religion works—why it inspires so much anti-Bush ire and pro-Kerry enthusiasm, why it appeals to an aging and anxious population, and where it would lead America if it became our national faith—should be a priority as we enter the final season of the campaign.

The issue of stem cells is scientifically and ethically complex. Stem cells are undifferentiated and self-replicating cells with the potential to become the differentiated cells that make up the various tissues in the human body. Laboratories acquire them from many sources: bone marrow, umbilical cord blood, aborted fetuses, embryos, cloned embryos. Stem cells harvested from adults for purposes of medical research are ethically unproblematic; research on such cells garners near-universal support and receives over $180 million per year in funding from the National Institutes of Health. Embryonic stem cells, harvested from human embryos which are destroyed in the process, are fraught with ethical peril—and that is the reason we are having a far-reaching debate.

Most scientists believe that embryonic stem cells hold the greatest medical promise. Just as a tiny embryo can develop into a baby, with all its exquisitely specialized organs and parts, so embryonic stem cells can become virtually any type of human cell, with a facility seemingly greater than adult stem cells. But embryonic stem cell research is in its earliest stages, and no one knows whether these powerful cells can be directed in ways that are therapeutically useful. Moreover, it is hard to say whether the scientific establishment, in its political quest to secure more funding and stave off regulation, is overstating the promise of embryonic stem cells and understating the promise of non-embryonic stem cells. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the scientific potential of embryo research, or the large stake the scientific community now has in its success.

Nor can one deny the ethical problem this research poses. When one speaks with leading embryonic stem cell researchers, it is disarming to discover that the destruction of human embryos is already normal. An embryo is just a "clump of cells," the scientists say, as "small as the period at the end of this sentence." But if embryos were just clumps of cells, scientists would not want them so badly. The unique biological power of an embryo is inseparable from the *kind* of organism it is: an integrated, developing, genetically whole human creature in the earliest days of life. Three decades ago, scientists gained the power to initiate life in the laboratory; now they

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destroy it routinely, without fear and trembling.

The embryos needed for embryonic stem cell research can come from three sources: (1) They can be produced by in vitro fertilization (the union of egg and sperm in the laboratory) performed on behalf of infertile couples, who often produce more embryos than they actually implant to have children. (2) They can be produced by in vitro fertilization solely for the purposes of research. Or (3) they can be cloned—that is, produced using "somatic cell nuclear transfer," in which a person's DNA is inserted into an enucleated human egg. This is the technique that produced Dolly the sheep, and it is the first step on the way to reproductive human cloning.

For a while, proponents of embryo research were willing to draw certain ethical lines and respect certain ethical limits. For example, when NIH proposed funding for the creation of embryos solely for research in 1994, the Clinton administration (which supported embryo research) rejected the proposal as too radical. And when President Bush deliberated about federal funding of stem cell research in 2001, stem cell advocates called for funding *within* limits: They argued that thousands of embryos were already frozen in storage, and that funding research on *those* embryos imposed no extra moral cost.

Today, the debate has moved on. Leading proponents of embryo research are more radical—demanding more public funding (without which they say research is "banned"), rejecting past limits, and promising the moon. Kerry epitomizes this radicalization of the stem cell movement. At Kerry's convention, Ron Reagan lauded "personal biological repair kits" derived from cloned embryos, and his running mate, Sen. John Edwards, endorsed "therapeutic cloning."

So it seems Democrats are now poised to cross yet another ethical and political boundary: federal funding for the creation, study, and destruction of cloned human embryos. After all, if cloned embryos are necessary to provide stem cells tailor-made for the individual, and if stem cell research can succeed only with federal funding, then the day has come for a national project of cloned embryo research. The ideology of stem cells has made the Democrats the party of cloning. And like all true believers, they believe inconvenient facts can be ignored and that history is on their side.

"The medical discoveries that come from stem cells are crucial next steps in humanity's uphill climb," John Kerry declared this summer in a radio address. "The tide of history is with us," Ron Reagan intoned at the convention. "We have a chance to take a giant stride forward for the good of all humanity. We can choose between the future and the past, between reason and ignorance, between true compassion and mere ideology." Indeed, the stem cell issue has a visceral appeal to liberals, who construe it as a referendum on Bush's backward-looking religiosity and a sign of their own compassionate enlightenment. If only they can sweep aside misguided leaders who mistakenly see a moral problem in embryo research, the stem cell ideology can win over a generation of aging baby-boomers—who shudder at their own mortality and count medical progress among the highest goods. Paul Ramsey, the late bioethicist, was more sensible, believing that "the moral history of mankind is more important than its medical history." Usually the two move forward together—but not always.

The ideology of stem cells has made the Democrats the party of cloning. And like all true believers, they are sure that history is on their side.

If Kerry wins, the stem cell debate will be over, at least politically. He will reverse the three-year-old Bush policy of limiting federal funding to certain existing embryonic stem cell lines, and he will work to overturn the eight-year-old Dickey Amendment prohibiting federal funding for any research that directly involves the destruction of human embryos. He will begin a national project of embryo creation and destruction, enshrining it in American national policy.

And the debate about human cloning may also be over. As recently as July, John Kerry co-sponsored a bill that would allow the creation of embryos by cloning for research so long as they are destroyed after 14 days. Thus, in the name of curing disease, he would have us perfect the technology necessary to clone children. And if recent history is any guide, the taboo against cloning to produce children will erode, as the left defends it as just another reproductive choice. Even more broadly, the possibility of banning a whole range of radical new types of human procreation—producing children with genes from two men or two women, say, or producing children whose parents are dead fetuses—may disappear.

Perhaps this is the direction America is heading already—toward the normalization of the radical in biotechnology, and toward the loss of all qualms about using human embryos as research materials. Or perhaps, years from now, the embryo destruction project will be another embarrassing wart on American history—a moral error, corrected by those who follow us. But it is a distraction to look too far into the future, with either excessive despair or excessive optimism. Today's election is what matters now, and John Kerry has given America a clear choice: the party of cloning or the party of moral limits. ♦

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Peasant Danger

China's rural troubles are migrating to Beijing.

BY JENNIFER CHOU

OVER THE PAST YEAR, increasing numbers of the displaced and disaffected from across China have been descending on Beijing to seek redress of grievances. Reviving the ancient custom of *shangfang*—the practice of petitioning the central authority to right wrongs perpetrated by local officials—unemployed workers and dispossessed peasants, demobilized soldiers and victims of fly-by-night investment schemes are banding together and traveling to the capital. There, they stage sit-ins in front of the Complaints Office of the State Council, the National People's Congress, the Central Disciplinary Commission, or the Central Organizational Department, recounting the transgressions of corrupt functionaries in the provinces, telling and retelling tales of homes destroyed and lives ruined, often to indifferent passersby and unresponsive officials.

A dramatic incident on July 18 brought the trend into sharp focus. Twenty-three petitioners climbed to the top of a 65-foot building in Beijing and threatened to jump. A five-hour standoff with police ensued, with thousands of petitioners and bystanders looking on. The group was eventually detained and charged with disturbing the peace.

Other petitioners at the scene told Radio Free Asia's Mandarin Service that the group represented thousands of workers laid off by the Hegang City Mining Bureau in Heilongjiang province between 1996 and 1998. Ten days earlier, several thousand of these unemployed workers had blocked a rail line between Jixi and Harbin to protest the disappearance of funds earmarked for their severance benefits. Then they had selected 36 representatives to plead their case in the capital. When their petition fell on deaf ears, 23 decided to commit suicide. Three days later, another 200 petitioners from Heilongjiang arrived in Beijing and demonstrated outside the Complaints Office of the State Council, and 400 more were intercepted by police and sent back to Heilongjiang.

For these petitioners and many more, the central government holds out the last hope of correcting an unjust court ruling, an unfair severance package, or abusive treatment by local officials. The majority of the petitioners fall into three categories.

The first consists of workers laid off by state-owned enterprises whose severance benefits were cut or who feel they were short-changed in negotiations over their severance pay. Their complaints are often dismissed by local courts on grounds that they had signed legally binding documents. Many, however, claim to have signed their termination agreements with factory managers under duress. A second group consists of peasants deprived of their livelihood by government land requisitions. And the third consists of city dwellers with similar complaints. The requisitioning of land by local governments is fast becoming one of the most controversial issues in both rural and urban areas.

According to the *People's Daily*, the official paper of the Chinese Communist party, the rapid industrialization and urbanization fueling China's breakneck economic growth have resulted in 40 million peasants' losing their land. On August 1, a land dispute in Henan province erupted into violence. Six hundred paramilitary police armed with tear gas and shotguns descended on the village of Shijiahe, near the provincial capital of Zhengzhou, to arrest the organizers of a protest against local officials who had allegedly embezzled profits totaling $4.8 million from sales of farmland. At least 50 villagers were injured in the clash. A woman in her 50s sustained shotgun wounds to her back and leg.

City dwellers have fared no better, and many who have been evicted from their homes to make way for new roads, factories, and office and housing developments have staged demonstrations in Beijing. Both peasants and urbanites who have been evicted from their homes complain of forcible removal and poor compensation.

The problem lies not with industrial development *per se*, but with China's land-rights system. All land belongs to the state. Neither peasants, who farm land leased to them for 30 years, nor city dwellers own the land they inhabit. Local authorities "renegotiate" leases whenever they wish to seize land for development, which is ever more profitable. Cashing in on a bullish real estate market, local officials reap big profits from land sales. As a result, the number of poor, landless peasants is increasing sharply—at a rate of 2 million a year, according to the *People's Daily*.

Official statistics record that the Chinese Ministry of Construction received 18,620 complaints regarding demolitions and forced evictions in the first six months of 2004—slightly more than it received in the entire year of 2003. China's vice minister of construction, Fu Wenjuan, was recently quoted in the Hong Kong media as saying that half the current demand for real estate in China is being met by local government-backed demolitions and evictions.

Distrustful of local officials, disillusioned with the courts, and vulnerable because of their lack of property rights, petitioners look to Beijing for administrative fairness. It's a challenge to the central government that is growing. ♦

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The Kerry Wars

Where was John Kerry on December 24, 1968? Not in Cambodia.

By Matthew Continetti

John Kerry, fresh from a three-day vacation at his retreat in Ketchum, Idaho, addressed the annual convention of the International Association of Fire Fighters in Boston last week, and it was quite a speech—combative, fiery, personal. The firefighters' union was one of the first to endorse Kerry during the Democratic primaries last year, as the candidate barnstormed among the snowy drifts of New Hampshire and Iowa, and on Thursday Kerry spoke to them plainly but forcefully, as one would to old friends. "Over the last week or so," Kerry began, "a group called Swift Boat Veterans for Truth has been attacking me. Of course, this group isn't interested in the truth—and they're not telling the truth. They didn't exist until I won the nomination for president."

The firefighters listened quietly.

"Of course," Kerry went on, "the president keeps telling people he would never question my service to our country. Instead, he watches as a Republican-funded attack group does just that. Well, if he wants to have a debate about our service in Vietnam, here is my answer." He paused. "Bring it on."

The firefighters roared. Once a rhetorical staple of Kerry's on the campaign trail, the phrase "Bring it on" had been remaindered of late, the Kerry campaign having come to the decision, according to Democratic strategists, that the utterance sounded silly. But Kerry was all seriousness when he addressed the firefighters. This was personal.

Which shouldn't be surprising. It's not every day a war thought finished over 30 years ago starts up again. And that is a fair description of what has taken place on the campaign trail over the last two weeks, as the Kerry campaign wrestled with charges from a group of anti-Kerry Vietnam veterans that he distorted—even lied about—his war record. The group with the portentous name has accused Kerry of winning medals under false pretenses, of killing defenseless Vietnamese, of lying about his location and activities during the four months he spent in Vietnam. The veterans make their case in a television ad, which they ran in three key swing states (West Virginia, Ohio, Wisconsin) and also in a book, *Unfit for Command*, which was written by the group's leader, a veteran named John O'Neill, along with a political scientist named Jerome Corsi.

These are not trivial claims. The Swifties don't give Kerry the benefit of the doubt on any issue. They challenge the circumstances behind every medal he earned in Vietnam. Their accusations are of three broad types.

First, there are issues of fact that are difficult, if not impossible, to resolve. The controversy over how Kerry earned his Bronze Star and third Purple Heart, for example, in which the young lieutenant pulled special forces soldier Jim Rassmann from the Bay Hap river, revolves around whether or not there was enemy fire at the time. Kerry says there was; the anti-Kerry veterans—some of whom were present that day, in boats alongside Kerry's—say there wasn't. The documentary evidence available so far backs Kerry's story. For example, *Washington Post* reporter Michael Dobbs reported last week that a newly uncovered medal citation for Larry Thurlow, one of the veterans who challenge Kerry's account of the Rassmann incident, supports Kerry. Thurlow claims to have lost the citation over 20 years ago, but has refused to release his service records. Something similar happened in the case of Kerry's Silver Star, as one anti-Kerry vet told conflicting stories to the *Boston Globe* over the course of a year. In the final analysis, however, such claims boil down to Kerry's word versus his opponents'.

The second sort of accusation is even harder to pin down, because it delves into questions of intent. Personal scruples also play a role here. These are charges that Kerry was not entirely honest in the after-action reports he wrote from the field; that as time passed his version of battles grew exaggerated and distorted; that details in Douglas Brinkley's *Tour of Duty*, an account of Kerry's war years, conflict with those in the *Boston Globe* biography, *John F. Kerry*. The story of how Kerry earned his first Purple

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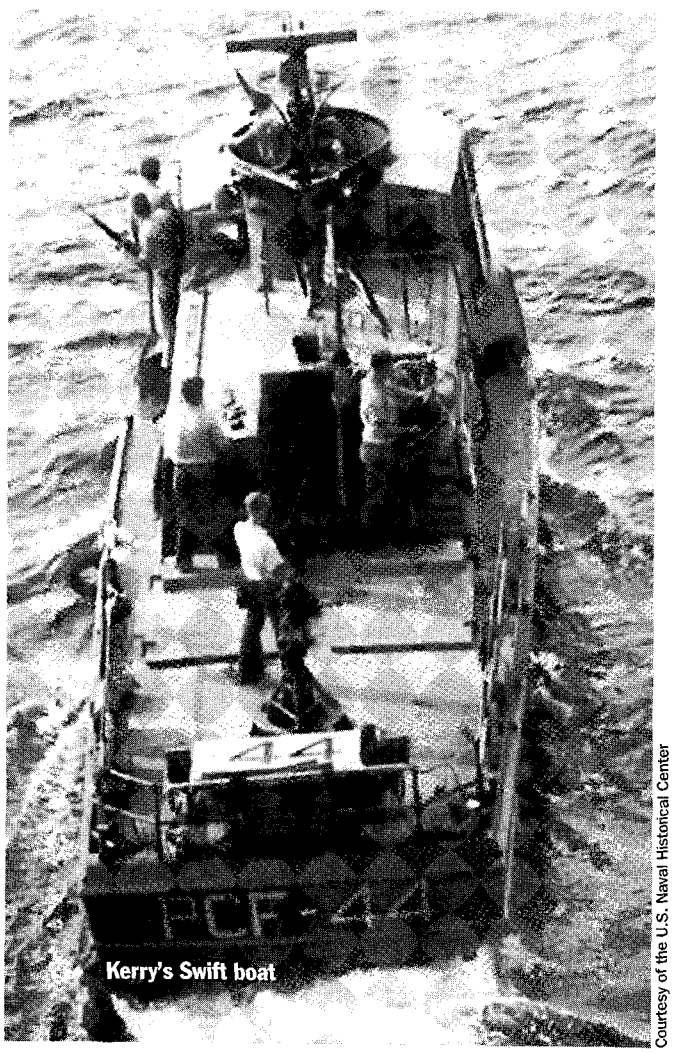
Heart falls into this category, as do the events surrounding an attack on a sampan by Kerry's crew in the late winter of 1969. The charge here is not that Kerry "lied," or even that he has "distorted" the truth, but that he has told inconsistent stories over the years, occasionally omitting certain details.

It is the third sort of charge—that Kerry has sometimes painted a demonstrably false picture of events—that is the hardest to dismiss. John O'Neill's group insists Kerry was not in Cambodia on Christmas Eve 1968, as the senator has repeatedly asserted that he was. They maintain that no one—including members of Kerry's crew who otherwise support the senator—has yet corroborated Kerry's presence in Cambodia that Christmas Eve. And indeed, after the charge had been vetted by a ravenous host of Internet bloggers, and broadcast on numerous talk radio and cable news programs, the Kerry campaign, along with Douglas Brinkley, was forced to concede: On this point, the anti-Kerry Swifties may be right.



Kerry's Swift boat

Courtesy of the U.S. Naval Historical Center

On October 14, 1979, John Kerry made his debut as a film critic for the Boston *Herald*. The film in question was *Apocalypse Now*, Francis Ford Coppola's sprawling, lushly photographed Vietnam War drama. Kerry's review was harsh. "Francis Coppola brings us *Apocalypse Now* the same way the politicians and generals brought us the war in Vietnam," Kerry wrote, "by spending a lot of money, displaying a lot of technical razzle-dazzle, and by losing all sense of proportion and direction." Plus, "Coppola's Vietnam is devoid of reality and feeling."

Kerry served in Vietnam from November 1968 to March 1969, and he related Coppola's movie to his own experience. "On more than one occasion," he went on, "I, like Martin Sheen in *Apocalypse Now*, took my patrol boat into Cambodia." Kerry continued: "In fact I remember spending Christmas Eve of 1968 five miles across the Cambodian border being shot at by our South Vietnamese allies who were drunk and celebrating Christmas. The absurdity of almost being killed by our own allies in a country in which President Nixon claimed there were no American troops was very real." It was that same absurdity which Coppola failed to capture in the film, Kerry said.

Kerry's criticism was biting, but his implied chronology was off. President Nixon didn't claim there were no American troops in Cambodia in December 1968. Indeed, he couldn't have. He wasn't president until January 20, 1969. Nevertheless, Kerry continued to recount his Christmas Eve adventure in the waters of Cambodia after he was elected to the Senate in 1984.

For example, on March 27, 1986, Kerry took to the floor of the Senate to protest President Reagan's funding of the anti-Communist contras in Nicaragua. Like many Kerry speeches, this one warned against American intervention abroad by resurrecting the specter of the U.S. defeat in Vietnam: "Mr. President, I remember Christmas of 1968 sitting on a gunboat in Cambodia," Kerry began. "I remember what it was like to be shot at by Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge and Cambodians, and have the president of the United States telling the American people that I was not there; the troops were not in Cambodia."

Kerry paused.

"I have that memory, which is seared—seared—in me," he went on, "that says to me, before we send another generation into harm's way, we have a responsibility in the United States Senate to go the last step, to make the best effort possible in order to avoid that kind of conflict."

The memory of his Christmas in Cambodia, indelibly

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seared into his mind, was such that Kerry often told others about it. Reporters, for example. In an AP dispatch published on June 25, 1992, reporter John Diamond wrote that, by Christmas 1968, "part of Kerry's patrol extended across the border of South Vietnam into Cambodia."

"We were told, 'Just go up there and do your patrol,'" Kerry told Diamond. "Everybody was over there [in Cambodia]. Nobody thought twice about it." Five years later, in a September 4, 1997, Senate subcommittee hearing on Cambodian politics, Kerry began his remarks by saying, "I first was introduced to Cambodia when I spent Christmas Eve of 1968 in a river in Cambodia during the Vietnam conflict." Kerry was impressed with what he saw. "I found it to be a rather remarkable and very beautiful country which had an allure to me, and to many others," he told his fellow lawmakers, "which has been sustained through those years."

In June 2003, Kerry repeated his story to *Boston Globe* reporter Michael Kranish, who later included it in *John F. Kerry*, the biography he wrote with coauthors Brian Mooney and Nina Easton. Kerry told Kranish that his adventures on December 24, 1968, began "near Cambodia," when his Swift boat was ambushed by Viet Cong. But later, Kerry said, "he had gone several miles inside Cambodia, which theoretically was off limits." Kerry's incursion put him in a cynical mood. He told Kranish he had sent a "sarcastic message" to his superiors from the Navy's "most inland" unit.

For Kerry, incursions into Cambodia brought home the central absurdity behind the American war in Vietnam: It was a war in which you had trouble distinguishing friend from foe in a country that your government denied you ever set foot in. To understand John Kerry, Michael Kranish told Fox's *Hannity & Colmes* last month, you have to understand his war experience. "And in one short anecdote I'll tell you," Kranish continued, "that in Christmas of 1968, he was on a small boat with his men, basically in Cambodia at a time when Richard Nixon was telling the American public that we're not in Cambodia. And he basically became skeptical."

Yet Kerry's account of his Christmas adventure in Cambodia is not supported by hagiographer Douglas Brinkley in his book *Tour of Duty*. Here is how Brinkley tells it:

> Christmas Eve, 1968, turned out to be memorable for the men of PCF-44 [the boat Kerry commanded] though not in the jingle-bells sense folks were enjoying back home. The only concession to the holiday spirit was that morning's rare breakfast of scrambled eggs, after which the crew headed their Swift north up the Co Chien River to its junction with the My Tho only miles from the Cambodian border.

"Only miles from the Cambodian border" is elaborated in the next sentence:

> Because they were only an hour away from that neighboring country, Kerry began reading up on Cambodia's history in a book he had borrowed from the floating barracks in An Thoi.

Only an hour away?

Douglas Brinkley's book and *Unfit for Command* agree that Kerry was stationed at Sa Dec in December 1968. However, Sa Dec is about 55 miles from the Cambodian border. The anti-Kerry veterans—among them Kerry's commander at the time, George Elliott, and Elliott's superior, Rear Admiral Roy Hoffmann—say that areas close to Cambodia were not patrolled by Swift boats at all, but by smaller craft called PBRs. "If he'd attempted to go in, he would have been stopped," Hoffmann told me last week. What's more, O'Neill writes in *Unfit for Command*, "preventing border crossings was considered so important at the time that an LCU (a large, mechanized landing craft) and several PBRs were stationed to ensure that no one could cross the border."

The Cambodia story put the Kerry campaign on the defensive. Two weeks ago, Kerry spokesman Michael Meehan issued a statement. Here it is in its entirety:

> On December 24, 1968 Lieutenant John Kerry and his crew were on patrol in the watery borders between Vietnam and Cambodia deep in enemy territory. In the early afternoon, Kerry's boat, PCF-44, was at Sa Dec and then headed north to the Cambodian border. There, Kerry and his crew along with two other boats were ambushed, taking fire from both sides of the river, and after the firefight were fired upon again. Later that evening during their night patrol they came under friendly fire.
>
> It is an acknowledged fact that Swift Boat crews regularly operated along the Cambodian border from Ha Tien on the Gulf of Thailand to the rivers of the Mekong south and west of Saigon. Boats often received fire from enemy taking sanctuary across the border. Kerry's was not the only United States riverboat to respond and inadvertently or responsibly cross the border. In fact, it was this reality that lead President Nixon to later invade Cambodia itself in 1970.

Read the statement carefully, and it becomes clear that it is a tacit concession. Meehan places Kerry's boat not in Cambodia, but "in the watery borders between Vietnam and Cambodia." Meehan had to hedge, because none of John Kerry's crewmates on PCF-44 affirms that they entered Cambodia. For example, the *Boston Globe* reported that James Wasser, a Kerry crewmate, "did not think" PCF-44 ever went into Cambodia. "It is very hard to tell," Wasser said. Wasser is a Kerry supporter. Steven Gardner, who was the gunner on PCF-44, and who is not a Kerry supporter, is more succinct. "Never happened," he told the

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Globe. "We didn't go to Cambodia," Gardner told me last week. "We were no closer than 40 miles, 30 miles max."

And Rocky Hildreth, another Swift boat commander in Kerry's division, said last week he "never heard of anybody going into Cambodia" in December 1968.

Indeed, at this writing, not a single Swift boat commander or crewmate of Kerry's has stepped forward to confirm that John Kerry was in Cambodia on Christmas Eve 1968.

For that matter, Kerry himself has not always been so precise about his location. "Christmas Eve I was getting shot at somewhere near Cambodia," he told the Providence *Journal-Bulletin* on April 3, 1994. "Stupid Vietnamese were celebrating Christmas by shooting tracers, fifty-caliber, right up into the air," Kerry went on, "and the goddamned things were coming right over our head. That was a wild night." Then, swept up in his rhetorical reverie, Kerry brought the Cambodia story full circle:

"That was a night like right out of *Apocalypse Now*," he said.

The anti-Kerry Swifties were in Washington last week, attending planning sessions and break-out panels at the Key Bridge Marriott, across the Potomac river from Washington's Georgetown neighborhood. They are middle-aged men now, their hair gray or absent, their paunches established, their combat fatigues replaced with golf shirts and khakis. Most are from the Midwest. Politically, they range from conservative Democrat to conservative Republican to independent-minded Perotista. In fact, most dislike politics altogether. "This is not about politics," one of the veterans, a 61-year-old man from Montgomery, Texas, named Jack Chenoweth told me. "This is about telling the truth." Van Odell, who in 1969 was Jack Chenoweth's gunner, said the anti-Kerry vets were making progress. "I feel optimistic," Odell said. "I felt when we started this thing we'd be a one-day news story. But we're still here."

Chenoweth first joined Swift Boat Veterans for Truth last March, when he received a call from John O'Neill. Like most of the anti-Kerry Swifties, Chenoweth has held a low opinion of John Kerry since Vietnam, one that was only reinforced by Kerry's antiwar activities in the early '70s. When Kerry delivered Senate testimony in April 1971 as a leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Chenoweth and others were repelled by statements like this one:

> Over 150 honorably discharged and many very highly decorated veterans testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia. These were not isolated incidents but crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command. . . . They told stories that at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in a fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war, and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country.

After O'Neill started tracking them down this year, the 250 or so veterans who have joined his effort began to reminisce and compare notes, some of them told me. And they compared their recollections with what they saw on Kerry's campaign website, as well as after-action reports O'Neill says he obtained from the Navy archives. Looking back from a distance of over 30 years, the veterans say they concluded that, when a firefight was over and Kerry wrote the requisite after-action report, the future presidential candidate bent what had happened to his own advantage. So they put together their own account of events: *Unfit for Command*.

The book has some conspicuous flaws. O'Neill and his coauthor attack Kerry for accusing veterans of committing war crimes in Vietnam, but then turn around and accuse him of committing the same. They raise the unanswerable question of whether Kerry "deserved" his medals. And, in its own way, the book accepts the same dubious premise that Kerry embraced at his nominating convention: that the American public should judge the 2004 presidential candidate centrally on his military service long ago.

And yet, on August 19, when Kerry addressed the International Association of Fire Fighters, he did not respond to any of the charges made by Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. He did attack the group's integrity, however. "Here's what you really need to know about them," Kerry said, his voice rising. "They're funded by hundreds of thousands of dollars from a Republican contributor out of Texas. They're a front for the Bush campaign. And the fact that the president won't denounce what they're up to tells you everything you need to know—he wants them to do his dirty work." Then, late last week, a Kerry campaign spokesman, along with some liberal commentators, urged Regnery, publisher of *Unfit for Command*, to pull the book, accusing the company of "retailing a hoax."

So it seems the Kerry wars will continue for some time. A debate over Vietnam was supposed to work to the senator's advantage, of course. If you watch Kerry on the stump, or read his speeches, or saw him take the stage at the Democratic National Convention, you could be forgiven for thinking that Kerry wanted this election to be a referendum on his experience in the Vietnam War at least as much as he wanted it to be about other issues. With the release of *Unfit for Command*, he got his wish. ♦

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The North Korean Nightmare

It's later than you think.

By Nicholas Eberstadt & Joseph P. Ferguson

E.H. Carr's powerful little book *The Twenty Years' Crisis* presciently argued in 1939 that the events leading Europe to war were not sudden and new, but rather two decades in the making; that interwar Europe's crisis was rooted in power politics, framed by the insatiable ambitions of revisionist states, and intensified by the stubborn unwillingness of some European (and American) leaders to recognize these unpleasant but unyielding realities. Though written in another time and of another place, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* could be offered as briefing material today for policymakers struggling to make sense of the international drama revolving around the nuclear weapons program of North Korea.

North Korea's nuclear crisis, of course, is not exactly breaking news. If, like Professor Carr, we wish to date the duration of the crisis, we would be obliged to look back many years: perhaps to Pyongyang's November 1992 refusal to cooperate with the inspectors from the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) who were attempting to reconstruct the full history of two suspect sites in North Korea's nuclear program; or to North Korea's March 1993 announcement of its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) that gave IAEA inspectors authority to pursue their inquiry; or even to the attendant March 1993 declaration by North Korea's Kim Jong Il of a "semi-state of war" and warning that "a touch-and-go grave situation has been created in which war may break out at any moment."

Indeed, the following depiction of the crisis on the Korean peninsula, written by Paul Bracken in the fall of 1993, might just as well have been published yesterday:

> North Korea is in a crisis that threatens its existence. . . . The situation is extraordinarily dangerous because these are the highest stakes possible. The Korean Peninsula, moreover, is heavily militarized and lacking in crisis management capacities. Dealing with nuclear proliferation in this high-stakes setting will be much more difficult than solving proliferation problems in other countries. . . . The absolutist regime in the North has limited maneuvering room and must operate within very shaky military and economic structures. Although there are risks of pressing it too hard, a nuclear-armed North Korea would constitute the long-feared nightmare of the international community: an over-armed state in a desperate position; with unstable decision-makers and poor command and control.

To be sure, the current particulars of the North Korean nuclear crisis differ in some respects from those a decade earlier. But it is nevertheless the same crisis, shaped by the same fundamentals. And like Carr's *Twenty Years' Crisis*, this Korean crisis may fester for years to come. But just as in interwar Europe, the balance is inherently unstable. Some decisive event or events will finally spark dramatic—perhaps explosive—changes that profoundly reconfigure the region's security equation.

For most of the actors embroiled in the drama—the United States, South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia—the preferred outcome to the crisis would be a comprehensive and peaceful resolution through diplomatic negotiations. But in this drama, as in Europe's interwar drama, the most desirable outcome may well be the least likely. Given the character and objectives of the drama's central actor—the regime in Pyongyang—it is difficult to see how the contending interests of the principal parties could be harmonized. This is not to suggest that we shall not see international talks convened or "breakthroughs" claimed. (We have, after all, already seen plenty of that over the past decade; more of the same likely lies ahead.) It is instead to suggest that such talks and "breakthroughs" are exceedingly unlikely to defuse the ongoing crisis itself.

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The North Korean nuclear crisis of 2002-2004 has been treated as a terrible surprise by practically all of the governments that have become embroiled in it. Before that eruption, it is well to remember, cautious optimism about a newly constructive attitude in Pyongyang had been spreading in international diplomatic circles for several years. And the optimists seemed to have facts on their side, for in the period between late 1999 and October 2002—that is to say, until the month Washington confronted North Korea with evidence that it was running a secret nuclear program in contravention of many pledges and treaty obligations—relations between Pyongyang and its neighbors (indeed, with the entire international community) were arguably better than at any previous point since the end of the Korean War.

Recall: South Korean president Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy" had resulted in the first-ever summit meeting between the Korean heads of state in the summer of 2000. Later that year, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Pyongyang, the highest-level visit by any U.S. official ever to North Korea. North Korea's international attitude was judged sufficiently propitious that eight European states (including Britain, Germany, and Italy) and the E.U. chose to normalize relations with Pyongyang. In September 2002, the Japanese prime minister also visited Pyongyang. That was the first visit to North Korea by a Japanese head of state. Kim Jong Il conducted two official visits to Russia in 2001 and 2002; these had been preceded by a historic visit to Pyongyang by Russian president Vladimir Putin in the summer of 2000. Chinese President Jiang Zemin also visited Pyongyang in September 2001. North Korea even seemed to be attempting to emulate China in a brief, failed experiment to open a special economic zone on the Yalu river in September 2002.

Against such a seemingly promising backdrop, the sudden radical downward spiral in North Korea's external relations since October 2002 looks all the more dismaying —and to many, puzzling. Central to any appraisal of the unfolding crisis must be an attempt to understand the motivations behind Pyongyang's covert project to produce the highly enriched uranium (HEU) used in nuclear warheads. Some analysts regard the attempt to acquire nuclear weapons as a classic strategy to further North Korea's goal of reunifying the peninsula militarily. Others emphasize survival—a last-gasp effort to save the dying regime of Kim Jong Il. Still others see in it a combination of motives: multiple attempts to assist regime survival, to assure "existential" deterrence against the United States, to prop up regime morale, and to intimidate South Korea and Japan.

Let us first examine, however, some of the hypotheses that *cannot* explain Pyongyang's behavior. After the October 2002 revelation of North Korea's covert nuclear program, much *sotto voce* criticism in diplomatic circles implied or stated that the current crisis was caused by the United States—specifically, by the hostile posture of the Bush administration. In this telling, the White House's flirtation with a doctrine of preemption, its designation of North Korea as a member of an "axis of evil," and the president's own trenchantly expressed "personal loathing" for Kim Jong Il pressed the North Korean government to abandon a policy of conciliation and grasp for nuclear options.

Yet a quick look at the chronology of the current crisis shows that the Bush administration cannot be the proximate agent of the current impasse. To put the matter bluntly, the latest turn of the North Korean nuclear crisis did not begin with a change of attitude in Washington. Rather, it commenced when Pyongyang was caught cheating—and admitted to it!

Moreover, as Western intelligence sources now seem to agree, the secret HEU program had begun by 1997—that is to say, years before the current administration came to office. That covert program, it is worth noting, barreled forward during the halcyon days of Kim Dae Jung's sunshine policy. It was going forward as North Korea normalized diplomatic relations with the E.U. and as Secretary Albright danced in Pyongyang. And it was proceeding even as the Japanese prime minister and Kim Jong Il signed a joint declaration pledging to "observe all the international agreements for a comprehensive solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula." The tenor of international relations, in other words, seems to have had no bearing on Pyongyang's inclination to pursue a secret nuclear weapons program.

Another unsatisfactory hypothesis—one canvassed mainly in progressive circles in South Korea—holds that the North's HEU program was actually devised as an inducement to break out of the existing diplomatic impasse with the United States, and to reach a more comprehensive settlement of the outstanding disagreements separating Washington and Pyongyang. Noting that North Korea's HEU project looks to be a slow program requiring years to complete, this argument suggests that the North's leadership chose this type of program precisely so that they could go about their game slowly and would have time to negotiate and bargain before they actually had a weapon.

Like the previous theory, this one too is empirically challenged. It neglects the hardly trivial fact that North Korea was caught out in a flagrant nuclear violation. Nuclear deceptions and nuclear violations, furthermore, are not ideal lubricants for a diplomatic breakthrough between two mistrustful governments. While it is true that slow progress in accumulating highly enriched uranium

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was foreordained by the decision to use many small centrifuges for the job, that choice seems to have been made to avoid detection. There is no evidence that Pyongyang would have informed its putative American negotiating partner of the HEU project if it had not been detected by U.S. intelligence.

At the end of the day, there remain a welter of alternative and in some measure conflicting theories about the intentions underlying North Korea's decision to pursue a secret nuclear weapons program. Faced with contending possible explanations for less-than-perfectly-understood events, logicians and epistemologists have long favored the most parsimonious explanation, aka Ockham's razor. To go by that approach, we might simply surmise that the drive to develop nuclear weapons reflects Pyongyang's deep desire to possess them.

It may want them for deterrence; as a national symbol; for economic benefits. It may want them as an insurance policy for state survival; as a tool in the quest for unconditional reunification with South Korea; as a means of equalizing its highly unequal contest with the United States. We may never have enough information to permit us to calibrate the relative importance of the many different possible factors that could stimulate the North Korean leadership's desire for nuclear weapons. We do know, however, that North Korean leadership plainly seems to want nuclear weapons and to want them badly. We know, for example, that North Korea has been pursuing its nuclear program for decades—and that it has built, at great expense to a very poor society, a complex and diversified nuclear infrastructure. As Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. noted shortly after the HEU effort was publicly revealed,

> Given what the West knows about North Korea's nuclear programme, it is evident that it has been, and is being, pursued in a manner similar to that of China. That is, in a parallel manner, exploring multiple paths concurrently rather than in serial form with each development building on the last.

The comparison with China seems particularly instructive. Like Beijing in an earlier era, North Korea has pressed forward with its nuclear project despite desperate privation and even famine, and regardless of its impact on relations with other countries. Nor have North Korea's nuclear actions in the months since October 2002 betrayed much ambivalence about the prospect of attaining nuclear-power status: Over this period, Pyongyang has declared the U.S.-North Korean "Agreed Framework" for freezing its nuclear facilities to be null and void; has formally withdrawn from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty; has expelled all IAEA monitors from its Yongbyon nuclear facility, removed all "safeguards" from the Yongbyon equipment, and opened the facility's 8,000 formerly sealed plutonium reactor rods; has announced it is reprocessing that plutonium; and has declared that its precarious military standoff with the United States is impelling it to develop a nuclear "peace deterrent."

All evidence at our disposal, in short, suggests that the North Korean leadership has treated the acquisition of a nuclear capability as an enduring and unshakable commitment, a top state priority. The troubling corollary to this analysis, of course, is that governments are not easily dissuaded from pursuing their own top priorities. The notion that the Pyongyang regime could be talked out of completing its longstanding nuclear weapons project would seem to require from students of international security something like a suspension of belief in the realities of power politics. Simply put, North Korea's arduous march toward becoming a nuclear power does not look like the sort of "international dispute" that is headed off by conventional negotiations.

Over the past two years, North Korea's neighbors have responded to the unfolding nuclear drama in varying ways. Distance from Pyongyang seems to govern these responses. The states furthest away have expressed the strongest responses, while the contiguous states have reacted rather calmly.

Considering that Russia (or rather the Soviet Union) probably had more to do with North Korea's nuclear weapons program than any other government, Moscow has seemed unperturbed by the entire situation. Rather than regarding an unstable neighbor's acquisition of nuclear weapons as a ticking time-bomb (so to speak), it has acted as if the latest crisis were an opportunity. Russian president Vladimir Putin and his foreign policy apparatus have to date treated Pyongyang's attempt to develop nuclear weapons not as a threat to international security—or to Russia's own interests—but instead as a device whereby Russia might regain its lost diplomatic foothold in North Korea, and reattain a measure of its former influence in Northeast Asia.

China remained surprisingly quiet about the North Korean nuclear issue in the months after the HEU revelations. The top Chinese leadership was already dealing with a vital domestic political issue—namely, the matter of leadership succession—and was thus more than usually loath to take an active role in a dispute involving North Korea, as Washington had been pleading for it to do. (President Bush phoned Chinese President Jiang Zemin three times in early 2003 to try to get a Chinese commitment to cooperate.) Chinese leaders are no doubt disturbed by the idea of a nuclear crisis leading to a war or the collapse of the North Korean regime. Yet until the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Beijing seemingly wished to limit its

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VII Photo Agency

DPRKitsch: a 3-D photo of Kim Il Sung

involvement in the deliberations with North Korea, and called for the United States to engage the North Korean leadership directly. Even so, China may have become impatient with the North's brinkmanship. David M. Lampton, a noted China-watcher in Washington, argued that China's leadership went from "complacent" to "apoplectic" over the North Koreans in the space of six months following the HEU revelations.

There were some fairly strong signals of Beijing's increasing displeasure with North Korea even before March 2003. The week after Pyongyang announced its impending withdrawal from the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, for example, China staged a seven-day military exercise near the North Korean border. And although the reductions were not publicly announced, Chinese trade data suggest that economic subsidies to North Korea were significantly cut between 2001 and 2002—a drop that continued into early 2003, when, in the wake of Operation Iraqi Freedom, China took the diplomatic initiative to broker multilateral talks with North Korea. (Since March 2003, China has hosted four such sessions: one round of three-way talks between Pyongyang, Washington, and Beijing, and three rounds of Six Party talks that also included Moscow, Tokyo, and Seoul.) Interestingly enough, though China has apparently used its economic leverage with North Korea now and again, it has to date consistently leaned against the threat of international economic sanctions: perhaps because Beijing fears such measures might actually undermine the North Korean regime, with untold consequences for China, or perhaps because such sanctions would be an application of pressure on the North beyond Beijing's own immediate control.

Despite Japan's reputation as an inveterate "hedger" in international crises, Japanese leaders, dealing with the aftermath of their own North Korean crisis involving Japanese abductees, moved unmistakably behind the United States on the latest nuclear crisis. When news of the North Korean announcement during Kelly's October 2002 trip became public, Tokyo immediately issued a denunciation; Prime Minister Koizumi added that the issue of normalizing relations with Pyongyang could go no further until both the issues of Japanese abductees and the North Korean nuclear program were resolved to Japan's satisfaction.

In the wake of the nuclear revelations, Japan adopted a number of uncharacteristically bold responses; surprisingly, these were met with little domestic opposition. First, in a departure from half a century of Japanese security policy, Defense Agency chief Shigeru Ishiba declared that Tokyo would advocate, and participate in, a preemptive strike against North Korea if Japan were in imminent danger of North Korean missile attack. Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi publicly supported Ishiba's position, explaining that such a move would be "within the legal framework" of the Japanese constitution, which limits military actions to self-defense. Second, after decades of tolerating

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such commerce, Japan moved to cut off sources of cash remittances that have been making their way into North Korea from the community of Japanese of Korean descent with ties to Pyongyang. In the Diet session that ended in June, Tokyo further stiffened its legal strictures, enabling the government to impose economic sanctions on North Korea unilaterally, and likewise summarily to ban specific ships from docking at Japanese ports.

Third, in June 2003 the Japanese Diet passed a series of war contingency bills that allow the government to assume increased powers in times of national emergency. That these bills passed with little controversy attests to the Japanese public's newly heightened concerns about security threats to their country—especially from North Korea. It should also be noted that Japan's moves were taken with little regard for public opinion across Asia, a consideration that weighed heavily on Japanese foreign and security policy in the past.

The latest round of the North Korean nuclear drama demonstrated that Tokyo has not yet mastered its habitual impulse to "hedge" in times of trouble. This past May, Prime Minister Koizumi felt compelled to make another visit to North Korea for another summit with Kim Jong Il—and to report after this seance that the Dear Leader "clearly" wanted to denuclearize his country. (This improbable declaration was followed a few months later by a renewed commitment of Japanese food aid for the also-unending North Korean food crisis.)

Even so: Japan's stance on the latest North Korean nuclear crisis has been practically the polar opposite of its position on the previous one. In the 1993-94 nuclear crisis, when U.S. forces were contemplating strikes against North Korea's nuclear facilities, Washington was unsure whether American planes would be welcome to land at Japanese civilian airports in case of emergency. Yet this shift in posture only signified that Japan was ready to follow on the North Korean nuclear problem. Tokyo was still unwilling and incapable of leading in a regional crisis.

The country most directly affected by the North Korean nuclear crisis, of course, is South Korea. Yet initially South Korean leaders seemed to be the least concerned with events just north of Seoul. As the crisis broke in the fall of 2002, Kim Dae Jung was already under siege for irregularities surrounding his sunshine policy: Evidence had surfaced that his government had made secret and illegal payments to the North, perhaps amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars, to secure the historic Pyongyang summit of June 2000. But President Kim was not prepared to admit that the new North Korean nuclear revelations threatened the very rationale of his beloved policy; indeed, his administration attempted to conduct business more or less as if the discovery of the HEU program had not occurred. In late 2002, South Korea was in the midst of a close, heated, and ideologically charged presidential election. A wave of anti-U.S. sentiment was sweeping the younger generation of South Koreans in the wake of the acquittal of two U.S. soldiers who had accidentally run over two young Korean schoolgirls in their military vehicle. It was obviously a less than auspicious time for U.S.-South Korean cooperation on the North Korean crisis.

The election of Roh Moo Hyun in December 2002 did nothing to dispel U.S. concerns about the reliability of its South Korean partner and ally. In the two months between election and inauguration, the Roh team did almost nothing to suggest to officials in Washington that the new administration would join the United States in confronting the North Korean nuclear problem. Doubt was expressed across South Korea that a nuclear weapons program even existed in the North, and at one point Roh himself was quoted as implying that if a war began he would keep South Korea out of the hostilities and act as a mediator between Washington and Pyongyang.

But if Roh was inclined to equanimity about the mounting North Korean threat, others whose opinion he could not ignore were not. In a blow to the confidence of the young Roh administration, Moody's Investors Service downgraded South Korea's credit rating outlook by two notches, from positive to negative, specifically citing the North Korean nuclear crisis; the ratings cut was accompanied by a significant dip in the South Korean stock market, a drop in foreign direct investment, a spike in borrowing costs, and an economic slowdown, all attributed in part to business jitters about the North Korean situation. At roughly the same time, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld broached the idea of drawing back a significant portion of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, especially those along the demilitarized zone (DMZ). It soon became clear that this was not a trial balloon, but instead a decision already determined. The prospect of a repositioning of American forces sent a shock through the South Korean body politic—and the possibility that the Pentagon's "rationalization" plan might actually prefigure a U.S. withdrawal was greeted with almost universal dismay, even in circles that had been extremely critical of U.S. policy just weeks before.

Under these unexpected pressures, the Roh government changed course, disavowing their most memorable comments from the prior months. Prime Minister Goh Kun called for U.S. forces to remain in Korea for deterrent purposes. Army Chief of Staff Nam Jae Joon "clarified" the government's military position by specifically identifying North Korea as the main threat to the security of the South. Although this designation might seem utterly

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unsurprising, the fact of the matter is that the Kim Dae Jung administration could not bring itself to describe the North in such a manner for most of its time in office.

By the time Roh visited Washington in May 2003, it was clear that the new president wanted to be seen as a partner with Washington. A healthy and credible U.S.-South Korea alliance, Roh had quickly learned, was imperative not only to restore public confidence in his rule in South Korea, but also to reassure the industrial and financial communities at home and abroad that South Korea was still a safe place to do business. Thus the Roh administration found itself in the delicate position of attempting a policy of "dual appeasement": of simultaneously placating Pyongyang and Washington. It was a tricky business, depending more than a little on vagueness and official indecision. In a June 2003 summit meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi, for example, Roh concurred in the formulation that a nuclear-armed North Korea would be "intolerable": but he carefully avoided spelling out exactly what measures would be "tolerable" to prevent this eventuality.

In subsequent months the "dual appeasement" approach not only persisted, but became routinized. Thus, on the one hand, Roh would press the National Assembly to approve the dispatch of South Korean troops in support of the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq, while on the other, Roh's newly minted unification minister would urge humanitarian relief workers and NGOs *not* to help North Korean refugees to flee their wretched homeland, counseling instead "restraint." The dynamic of dual appeasement took a potentially momentous turn in the spring of 2004, in the wake of a clownish presidential impeachment ploy engineered by South Korea's opposition party. North Korea's media howled for punishment of the lawmakers who had favored the appeasement-prone president; at the April 2004 polls, South Korean voters duly obliged. For the very first time in the history of divided Korea, the electorate in the South had concurred with advice from the regime in the North about the conduct of their own country's domestic affairs.

The United States has remained the most outspoken advocate of a tough line with Pyongyang—no great surprise, considering President Bush's unconcealed contempt for Kim Jong Il and his administration's doctrinal support for "regime change" as an instrument of international security policy. But a harsh attitude toward North Korea and its nuclear violations should not necessarily be mistaken for a coherent and effective policy. At various points during the escalating North Korean crisis, the Bush administration's position has seemed confused, reactive, or vacillating. Indeed, three and a half years into its tenure, the administration still seems to be searching for internal consensus, with the major differences of opinion within the government, particularly between the State Department and the Pentagon, by no means completely resolved.

The end of the military campaign in Iraq was expected by some to free up policy planning time for the North Korean problem, but this does not seem to have happened. Ironically, America's most substantive initiative in Korean affairs has involved *South* Korea—this being the envisioned realignment of U.S. forces, with a one-third reduction of U.S. forces in Korea now slated to take place by the end of 2005. While some would argue that the impending realignment was sensible and even long overdue, no one could seriously argue that it was the most pressing problem facing the United States in the Korean peninsula at the time.

By adopting the defiant but nonetheless largely passive posture of refusing to give in to North Korean blackmail, the Bush administration seems to be looking for other nations to take the lead on Korea. Of course, this stance may pay off sooner or later. The question is: How long can the world wait? Perhaps the White House is privy to reliable intelligence that the North's nuclear weapons program is still far from its objective. One can only hope this is the case, for problems in other regions, including the Middle East, promise to occupy still more of Washington's attention in the none-too-distant future. Already another nuclear crisis, this one in Iran, threatens to overshadow the dangerous sequence of events playing out on the Korean peninsula.

The Bush administration looks to be playing a waiting game with North Korea—while North Korea seems to be busily rushing toward its goal of declared nuclear power status. The yawning gap between the problem at hand and the American response to it is palpable: Almost two years into the latest flare-up in the North Korean nuclear crisis, Washington not only lacks a solution for this acute problem, but has apparently not yet begun to fashion a feasible *approach* to such a solution.

Although the Bush administration has made clear its disdain for the conciliatory approach toward Pyongyang taken by President Bill Clinton, it has offered very little indication of just what should replace it. To date, the administration's most proactive response to the North Korean nuclear crisis has been the creation of a multinational Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) for interdicting North Korean contraband abroad (an effort, it should be noted, that South Korea has declined to join).

Otherwise, the administration's record on North Korean affairs consists mainly of loudly proclaimed complaints about the pressure for bilateral negotiations with

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Pyongyang; of the affectation of an attitude of unconcern about North Korean threats to proceed with plutonium processing; and of taxonomic reclassification of Pyongyang to a member of the "axis of evil" from the Clinton administration's "state of concern."

Three alternative outcomes from the current impasse suggest themselves. The first would be to achieve a peaceful negotiated settlement—a diplomatic agreement whereby the North gave up its nuclear weapons program. (This is precisely what many argued Washington had arranged in the 1994 Agreed Framework, with the exchange of the Yongbyon facility for security pledges and economic incentives.) The second would be to ignore the North's extortion diplomacy and simply accept the advent of a nuclear-armed North Korea, coping with all the attendant dangers as they arise. A third outcome would be to implement and see through a strategy of regime change in Pyongyang.

The peaceful negotiated settlement is clearly the preferable outcome for most of the governments caught up in the North Korean nuclear crisis. It would be the least troubling and most immediately advantageous scenario for all of Pyongyang's potential negotiating partners. Unfortunately, the prospect of a negotiated agreement to dismantle Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program is extraordinarily remote. One may appreciate the odds against such an outcome when one considers the many obstacles against it.

One must begin with the problem of North Korean intentions. Over the past dozen years Western diplomacy has devoted no small effort to probing these. In the early 1990s, the South's Roh Tae Woo administration probed them for two years, eventually securing a Joint North-South Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in 1992. When that agreement collapsed, the Clinton administration and the U.S. government probed Pyongyang's nuclear intentions with the year and a half of diplomacy that culminated in the 1994 Agreed Framework. After 1998, in the wake of the first episode that threatened to topple the Agreed Framework, the Clinton administration probed North Korean intentions still further through what became known as the "Perry Process." And of course President Kim Dae Jung probed North Korean nuclear intentions from 1998 to early 2003 with his now-discredited sunshine policy. Reviewing this record, one might suggest we have a fairly clear idea of North Korea's nuclear intentions—like them or not. Those intentions do not exactly look conducive to a voluntary deal to denuclearize North Korea.

A second problem concerns the international precedent that would be established by a negotiated solution to the North Korean nuclear crisis. Thus far, North Korea has violated nonproliferation strictures more explicitly and provocatively than any other state—yet it has suffered no penalties for its behavior (apart from the cutoff of free oil supplies when the Agreed Framework foundered). The international community has *already* purchased an end to the North Korean nuclear program, through the now-moribund Agreed Framework. If it were to provide resources to shut down the North Korean nuclear project once again in a new negotiated settlement, the signal to would-be proliferators in other locales could only be destabilizing. The lesson of such a deal would not be lost on the government of Iran, or on the people of a reconstructed Iraq (whose former government was punished much more severely for much less threatening nuclear transgressions—perhaps precisely because they were not yet threatening). A negotiated settlement with rewards for Pyongyang would send a very dangerous message: Namely, swift development of a credible nuclear capability can be a savvy and profitable strategy—especially if a state finds itself in financial trouble.

Apart from all the other obstacles to a diplomatic settlement of the current nuclear crisis, there are forbidding particulars that should not be forgotten. Apart from the July 1953 armistice ending the Korean conflict—which has been upheld only through continuing force of American arms—it is hard to point to an agreement Pyongyang has abided by over its 55 years of state power. For nearly three decades, Pyongyang has been in effective default on hundreds of millions of dollars in loans it contracted in the West, and Soviet Bloc archives now reveal that North Korea routinely ignored the terms of its borrowings from Socialist creditors. North Korea has regularly and repeatedly flouted the protocols surrounding the use of diplomatic pouches, using these to transport narcotics and other illegal material to countries in which North Korean officials enjoy diplomatic immunity. The North Korean government has sponsored state terrorism in countries with which it enjoyed diplomatic relations. It has violated the territorial waters of governments who have granted it diplomatic recognition through state-sponsored shipments of drugs and military contraband. Given this history, why should anyone believe that North Korea would adhere to any new agreement—much less an agreement on nuclear arms?

The second possible outcome of the current crisis involves living with a nuclear North Korea. The United States has lived with, and outlasted, dangerous nuclear states in the past, as the history of the Cold War attests. But the costs and risks posed by a nuclear North Korea would be fearsome. The example of a North Korean nuclear breakout would encourage proliferation in other

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regions—and a nuclear North Korea could abet that proliferation through export of armaments, technology, and know-how. Within the Northeast Asian region, the impact of North Korea's entry into the nuclear club would also be far-reaching. More than any other modern state, Pyongyang makes its living off international military extortion; nuclear weaponry would dramatically improve the expected returns of that policy. With a hostile nuclear North Korea at its geographic center, the economies of the Northeast Asian region could not help but suffer: The business downturn that Seoul suffered as a consequence of North Korean saber-rattling in early 2003 presumably represents only a foretaste of what might lie in store for South Korea, Japan, and even China. And a nuclear-armed North Korea would necessarily and inescapably undermine the credibility of the U.S.-South Korea alliance, and the U.S.-Japan alliance—the very security architecture upon which postwar Northeast Asia's economic and political successes have been built. The erosion of deterrence in Northeast Asia could have further unpredictable, possibly cascading, consequences. None of them is likely to be pleasant.

The third possible outcome would be for the international community (or the United States) to aim for, and to achieve, regime change in the North. It is more difficult to generalize about this outcome. One can be assured that the path to regime change would be fraught with danger, and that the result, under even the most optimistic variants, would involve tremendous disruption and uncertainty. It does not require much imagination, for example, to see how a successful push for regime change could precipitate a mass exodus of starving North Koreans, whether overland into China and Russia, or by boat to Japan and South Korea. There is also a real possibility that the push for regime change in North Korea could result in war, in which case the likelihood of Seoul's escaping unscathed would seem quite small. In any event, however, a push for regime change in Pyongyang does not look to be in the cards. Whatever their other differences, the governments of China, Russia, South Korea, and Japan are today united in their aversion to a policy of promoting regime change in Pyongyang. Within the senior reaches of the Bush administration, the notion of regime change in North Korea has been discussed—but apparently, only toyed with. Occasional flirtations notwithstanding, American policy has never actually embraced the argument that regime change is either desirable or necessary in North Korea.

With no coalescence around a strategy for the North Korea problem, either in Washington or among America's partners in Northeast Asia, the situation is tilting in an incalculable direction. As during the interwar years of 1919-1939, there is an unstable equilibrium, and we are faced with an inherently dangerous situation. One additional factor makes the situation today even more dangerous than is widely appreciated: the North Korean leadership's poor decision-making record. Consider: Pyongyang's attempt to revitalize its economy in September 2002 through a vaunted "special autonomous region" for Sinuiju deteriorated into a fiasco when the project's newly chosen boss, the controversial Chinese businessman Yang Bin, was detained, tried, and convicted by Chinese authorities. In September 2002, Kim Jong Il's attempted "confession diplomacy" with Japan badly backfired, setting back prospects for North Korean-Japanese diplomatic normalization even further than they had been before the summit with Prime Minister Koizumi. This series of *faux pas* was followed by the nuclear tirades of October 2002 at meetings with Assistant Secretary of State Kelly that set the current phase of the North Korean nuclear drama in motion.

The most recent nuclear crisis raises further questions about the ability of the North Korean leadership to manage crises. In past disputes, the North Korean leadership consistently, and often skillfully, attempted to play off one nation against another. Today, by contrast, Kim Jong Il has managed to alienate and alarm most of his neighbors simultaneously—even though they have not yet responded to his mounting threats. To the extent one can today detect in Northeast Asia the nascent components of a coalition to punish North Korea for its nuclear transgressions, it is a prospective coalition being assembled more through the inadvertent actions of Pyongyang than through the conscious design of Washington. To quote once again Paul Bracken's 1993 study:

> This [situation] is dangerous because it indicates that little learning is taking place and that North Korea is a country in which the ruler is all-powerful, but ill-informed and unrestrained by competent advice. The danger, of course, is heightened by the fact that this decision-making system has control of an enormous military force and potential nuclear force, however small. . . . What this means is that North Korea is likely to be dangerously bad at crisis management. North Korea's policy is a loose collection of eccentric ideas emanating from the top through an incoherent—yet large and deadly—security structure that is short on caution and coordination.

Bracken's admonition should be kept very much in mind by anyone attempting to envision the eventual outcome of our yet-unfinished Ten Years' Crisis with nuclear North Korea. We may hope that the world community weathers this crisis in better and wiser fashion than it did the Twenty Years' Crisis some three generations ago; the record of events to date, however, provides but fragile grounds for such a hope. ♦

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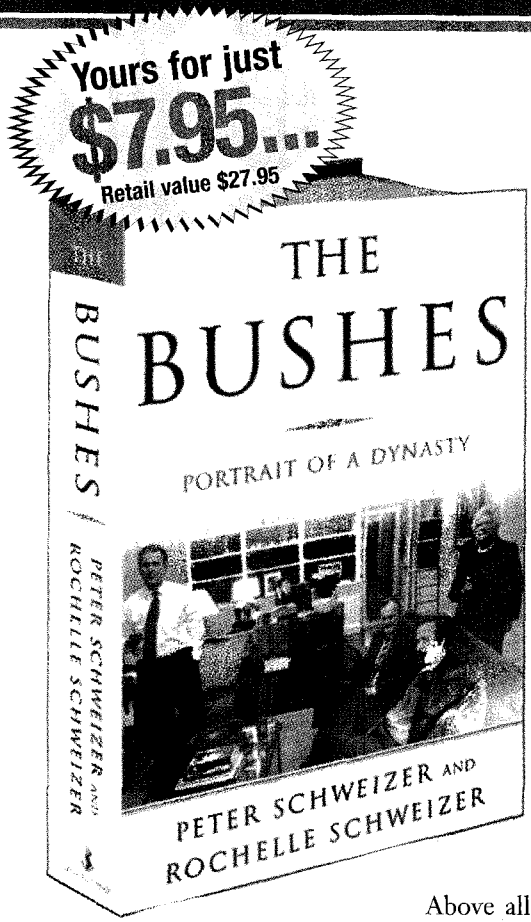
The Untold Story of the Remarkable Rise of the Bush Dynasty



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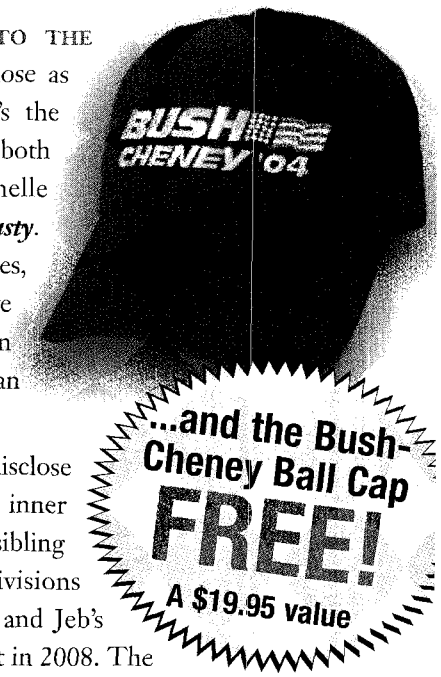

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Random House

The Substance of Style

By PAUL R. MCHUGH

Getty

It was inadvertent, an accident of timing, that my wife gave me a copy of Sally Bedell Smith's book *Grace and Power: The Private World of the Kennedy White House* right at the moment I had borrowed from the library Carol Thatcher's *Below the Parapet: The Biography of Denis Thatcher*. A blurb in our local paper had prompted my wife's gift, and I had checked out Thatcher's 1996 biography in an attempt to sustain the glow from Margaret Thatcher's remarks at President Reagan's funeral.

But these books, read side by side, suggest a truth about leadership—and, indeed, about the way we all live our lives, leaders or not. It turns out that our manners and our modes have consequences. It turns out that our fashions and our behaviors sway the decisions we make. It turns out that style influences substance. This isn't exactly a revelation. As A.E. Housman once put it, "the news is news that men have heard before." But the significance of style is nonetheless a truth of which we need some reminding these days.

Of the two authors I was reading, Sally Bedell Smith is the better writer, and—not being the daughter of her subject—can take a more objective look at her story. *Grace and Power* describes the way of life in the Kennedy White House with emphasis on the social and personal activities of John and Jacqueline Kennedy—matters that in other books form merely asides and incidentals during the political and historical events of the Kennedy administration. She vividly portrays more than forty other figures in that three-year drama as they interact with the protagonists. Smith conducted over a hundred interviews and drew from the biographies of the main characters, as well as from archives and personal papers in repositories such as the Library of Congress, the British Public Record Office, and even the FBI. Every factual statement, fresh phrase, or quotation is backed with a note to its source. Yet the writing runs smoothly with a minimum of friction for the reader.

Grace and Power
The Private World of the Kennedy White House
by Sally Bedell Smith
Random House, 640 pp., $29.95

The narrative of *Grace and Power* is chronological: beginning on the November 1960 Election Day and running through to the assassination and funeral of late November and early December 1963. The author offers little analysis of the historical issues of the day or judgment about the wisdom of the administrative decisions, but she is thorough in describing the events themselves and the reactions to those decisions. She is superb recounting the self-preening exercises of folk like Adlai Stevenson and Joseph Alsop as they struggled to gain the president's ear and be identified as leaders.

What impresses a reader most about the historical events is how little the administration was in charge of them. Much of what the government did was reactive rather than proactive. The White House is seen constantly scrambling to make up for what had already happened. The Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Berlin Wall, the Diem and Nhu assassinations in Viet-

Paul R. McHugh is a University Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and former psychiatrist in chief of the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

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nam: All came to pass with varying degrees of surprise to the administration. They offered opportunities for Kennedy to respond with dignity and élan, but he always played catch-up with events.

He was good at it—and certainly others might have been worse—but how one wishes he had been prepared to direct rather than to react to affairs of state. Perhaps, if he had had a second term, four years of playing defense might have prepared him to go on the offense. But perhaps not. From 1963 to 1980, several gifted and knowledgeable figures had influence on American policy, but they found themselves able to do little to direct the course of events. "Of all men's miseries the bitterest is this," Herodotus once wrote, "to know so much and to have control over nothing."

Smith does not try to explain the failure of the Kennedy White House to command. But just as we now know that Nixon's persecutory preoccupations distracted him and his associates from leadership, so Kennedy's astonishing sexual appetites (and the culture of compliance, secrecy, and collaboration that he generated in his circle) consumed psychic energies that might have been invested elsewhere. Smith is thorough—relentless one can say—in describing this aspect of Kennedy's life. She goes about it just as she does everything else in her story: as matters of fact, naming the women one after another (from glamorous stars such as Marilyn Monroe and molls such as Judith Campbell to women of family and stature and on to such young White House staffers as the pair dubbed "Fiddle" and "Faddle" by onlookers). She never displays a salacious interest—but as name after name rolls by, the result begins to sound Homeric, like the long chapter in the *Iliad* that's commonly called the Catalogue of the Ships.

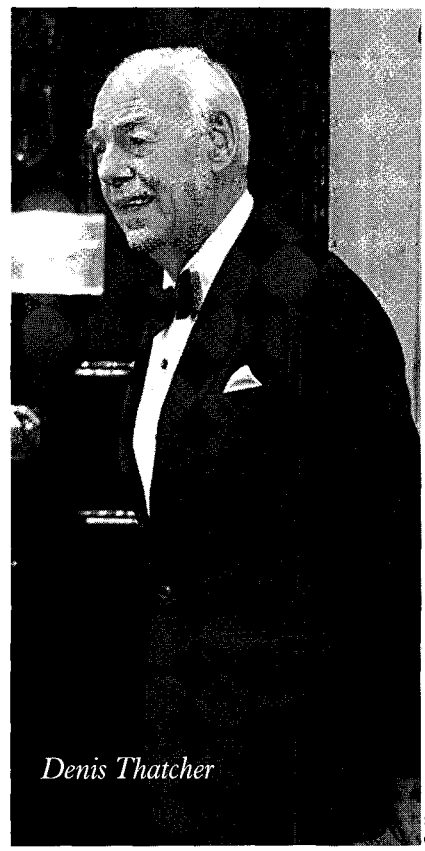
Smith shows Kennedy ever at it, whether at home in the White House, on the road at diplomatic meetings, or on vacation in Palm Beach. Women are slipped into the White House when Jacqueline is away, they are spirited to rendezvous in villas abroad, and they are squeezed into the backseats of limousines traveling between meetings. And slowly, as Smith describes the events, Kennedy's sexual incontinence infects the people in his court. His various pals from the past feast on his leavings, and even men such as Arthur Schlesinger and Robert McNamara who, one would think, were immune to such dalliances are eventually drawn into the dance. As these details accumulate, unforced, and straightforwardly in the narrative, a picture emerges not of Arthur's Camelot but of Suetonius' Rome.

As the curious lives of the Roman emperors influenced the empire, so the private lives of the Kennedy White House had an effect on public affairs. No one can live this way and plan a coherent future for anything, let alone plan how to confront the determined enemies of our country.

Here the contrast with Margaret Thatcher's life and rule strikes home. Carol, the daughter of Margaret and Denis, does not yet have the reportorial power and mastery of Sally Bedell Smith. She also is an affectionate observer of her parents' lives and marriage and thus may minimize some tensions. But, she is privy to many private experiences of both of them and describes what she saw and others told her about their times in Downing Street.

Margaret Thatcher is, if nothing else, in charge of events. She knows what she is doing, why she is doing it, and can explain her reasons to anyone. Her speeches are expositions of policy and thought. She labors over them and then follows their implications in doing what she said she would. Occasionally, as with the Falklands, she is surprised and must, like Kennedy, respond swiftly with a plan. But most of the time, she is ahead of the wave, surprising and confounding her opponents both domestic and foreign, while offering support to her friends and clear directions to her followers.

Much of her pluck, single-minded sense of purpose, and huge capacity for work rests upon the devotion and loyal support she gains from her husband Denis. Carol Thatcher depicts her parents' characters and partnership primarily from the perspective of Denis's life story. She tells of his early years, his first marriage that failed during the Second World War, to his great dismay, when he was abroad in the service, and his meeting Margaret early in her career as a member of the Conservative party. He is a businessman who successfully expands a family enterprise into an international company. They marry, have twins (Carol and her brother Mark), and proceed to cheer on each other's efforts. When she emerges as the leader of the Conservatives and, ultimately, as an historical figure and the dominant name in the family, he—often amazed at what is happening—celebrates her achievements, supports her in her new responsibilities, and yet continues until retirement at his business and his hobbies.


Denis Thatcher

Getty

He is no softhearted, women's-rights, go-along type, but a bluff character with gritty prejudices who probably would have resisted voting for a woman prime minister if he hadn't known her. The British press teasingly

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caricatured these traits—as in the "Dear Bill" parody letters Denis supposedly wrote to a drinking buddy about how he was deprived of gin and golf because of the duties and demands of his consort life. Carol reprints several "Dear Bill" letters with a laugh. In truth, Denis Thatcher never complained about his duties as the supportive spouse but carried them out quietly with dignity and poise. I came to see him as another of those heroes to duty that the British regularly generate when a strong response to a challenge is needed.

Gradually, in *Below the Parapet*, a view emerges of how the personal side of the Thatcher world came to influence the public side. Obviously, Margaret needed more than just attentiveness from others to accomplish her aims, but her ever-present devoted husband—this strong, constant friend—helped her boldly exert the gifts of character and vision she brought to the job.

That style leads to substance is perhaps a truism. But it is what we might call a *true* truism—a cliché that for me was never better exemplified than by these descriptions of two administrations and how each mirrored its leader in thought, action, and achievement.

Kennedy and most of his circle (with the prominent exceptions of Robert Kennedy and Sargent Shriver) selfishly exploited the glamour and prerogatives of office and so, being preoccupied privately, dealt with history one crisis at a time. Kennedy will be remembered as mostly overmastered by the global situation he faced and lucky not to have done worse. Thatcher brought a confidence built on personal trust to her work and forged an administration that, reflecting her style and character, addressed with foresight and vigor a multitude of domestic and international problems. She will find her place amongst the greatest leaders of Britain—for the policies she articulated, the changes in government she induced, and the victories she won.

Our manners and our modes have consequences, our fashions and our behaviors sway decisions, and our style influences our substance—because we are, finally, what we do. ♦

Athenian History

The glory that was, briefly, Greece.

BY A.E. STALLINGS

Never has a city been so identified with an idea, or an idea with a city, as Athens and democracy. By Athens, of course, we mean the Athens of the fifth century B.C., and by democracy we mean the government described by Pericles in his funeral oration of 431 B.C., as given to us by the historian Thucydides.

Athens: A History
From Ancient Ideal to Modern City
by Robin Waterfield
Basic, 320 pp., $27.50

Yet as Robin Waterfield points out in his excellent *Athens: A History*, Pericles' oration was a eulogy not only for the fallen of war but, unwittingly, for democratic Athens itself. If Athens was at its zenith under Pericles, its descent was precipitous. Pericles himself shortly succumbed to the plague. Within thirty years, Athens was defeated by her arch-rival, the quintessentially undemocratic Sparta—a nation-state marked by a cult of militarism and ruled by a narrow band of elites in constant fear of revolt by the slaves that greatly outnumbered them. Indeed, that shining symbol of democracy, the Parthenon, might just as easily be seen as a symbol of the arrogance of empire, built with money contributed by Athens' allies for their mutual defense against the Persians—but diverted by Pericles to the ornamentation of his beloved city, even while those allies were being turned Athenian subjects.

Athens continued to be a cultural beacon after it lost the Peloponnesian War to Sparta, becoming, in essence, the university town of the ancient world. But the city was locked into a descent that continued for millennia. Passed over by the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, Athens became a Balkan backwater of the Ottoman empire, a huddle of houses in the shadow of the marble bones of the Parthenon, and an eccentric and even perilous afterthought for travelers on the Grand Tour. Visitors, reared on orators, poets, playwrights, and philosophers, have always found the real Athens a letdown. In *Athens: A History*, Waterfield amusingly traces the disappointment to the contemporary tourist who, dismayed at the smog and the sprawl of cement apartment blocks, might want to exclaim along with Synesios of Cyrene (410 A.D.): "Death to the blasted captain who brought me here! Athens no longer has anything sublime except the famous names of places."

Waterfield portrays this fall as a Greek tragedy (itself an Athenian invention), with the Aristotelian ingredients of hubris, self-destructive drive, and tragic flaw. And just as the great tragedians used their plays not only as sacred entertainments but as mirrors held up to the citizens of Athens in which they might behold the morality and consequences of their actions, so Waterfield presents the history of Athens as a cautionary tale for the United States.

Such allegories work best when done with a light hand. Free peoples have always associated themselves with the Athenians. It was natural during the Cold War to feel some echo of the long struggle of the Peloponnesian War between democratic Athens and totali-

A.E. Stallings is an American poet living in Athens. Her first collection, Archaic Smile, *received the Richard Wilbur award.*

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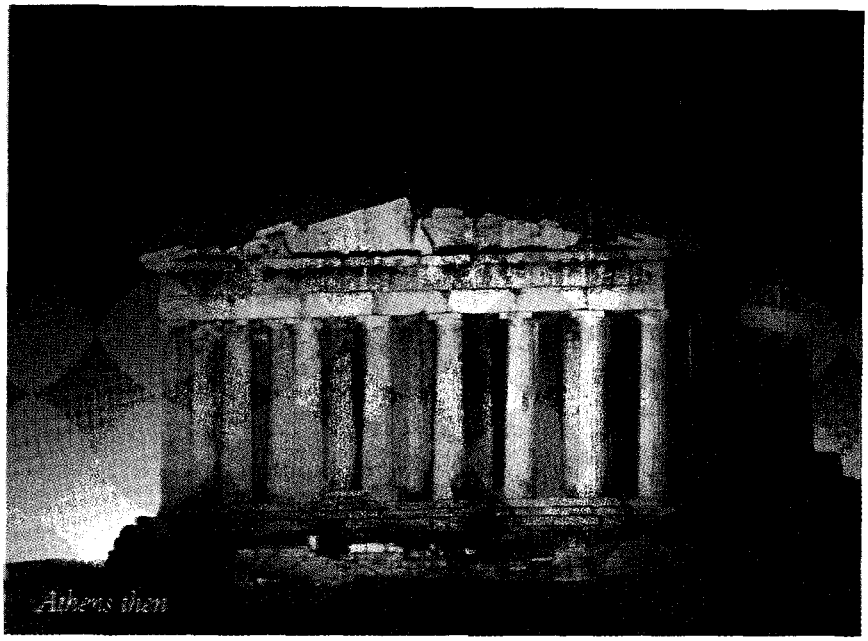

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Athens then

tarian Sparta. So now, perhaps, during the struggle in Iraq, it is tempting to meditate on the Athenians' debate over their preemptive expedition to Sicily. But when Waterfield makes the comparison explicit—ending the book with an envoy that warns America against Athenian overreach—the argument loses much of its power. Here the author is preaching, unlikely to persuade those not already in choir-robes.

Throughout *Athens: A History*, Waterfield sees the vital choice for Athens as being between the arrogance that is the temptation of empire and a panhellenism which acknowledges the equality of other Hellenes in a step towards acknowledging the equality of man. He finds this panhellenism embodied in such institutions as the ancient Olympics. The fascinating chapters on the ancient Olympics and the modern Olympian movement are the most original and elegant, enlivened with a wealth of quotations from primary sources in the author's own translations.

Waterfield acknowledges that the ancient Greeks would not have recognized many of the modern virtues ascribed to sport—particularly the Victorian schoolboy virtues expressed in Sir Henry Newbolt's oft-quoted lines *For when the One Great Scorer comes / to write against your name / He marks not that you won or lost / But how you played the game*. (The contemporary version of this Victorianism, in the list of virtues being advertised for the 2004 Olympics, is "effort.") As far as the ancient Greeks were concerned, winning *was* everything—not *higher, faster, stronger*, but *highest, fastest, strongest*—and woe to the losers. Waterfield quotes Pindar: *They cower in back alleys, / Keeping away from their enemies, / Full of remorse at their failure.*

The subtitle of the book, *From Ancient Ideal to Modern City*, appears something of a misnomer, in that a full two-thirds of the book covers the rise of Athens—its unique form of government, its short-lived empire, the disaster of the Peloponnesian war—through to 411 B.C. The remaining two and a half millennia occupy only the next hundred pages or so—with short sections devoted to Lord Byron's galvanizing involvement in the Greek War of Independence, the destruction of the Parthenon, and the still controversial topic of Lord Elgin's removal of the Parthenon marbles to England. (Waterfield is in favor of their return.)

The years since Greece achieved independent nationhood (not to mention Athens' radical change from charming neoclassical town to modern mega-sprawl) are relegated to a mere handful of pages. Waterfield himself admits in the introduction that, for various reasons, he has "dealt with the era since 1834 in some haste." Yet even with the paucity of Hellenistic and Byzantine sources on Athens, he manages to bring history to life with anecdotes—such as when, during a battle over the Acropolis in 1821, the besieging Greeks supposedly sent up bullets to the Turks to stop them melting down the lead joinery of the Parthenon for ammunition.

It is a slight flaw that this solid book is framed by the ephemeral topicality of the 2004 Olympics and the war in Iraq. The epilogue on the 2004 games was dated even before the opening ceremonies this month, since there was a change of government in Greece in the lead-up to the Olympics. Yet one of the most refreshing aspects of *Athens: A History* is Waterfield's affection not just for the ideal Athens—the marble building projects of a Periclean golden age and all they've come to represent—but for the real, contemporary city's chaos, cacophony, and vibrancy. Perhaps the return of the Olympics marks the movement when her long sunset will finally be followed by a rosy-fingered dawn. ♦

Athens now

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Just Poetry

Donald Justice's life's work.

BY LEN KRISAK

From his odes to old men in Miami parks to his sonnets speaking of islands and his glimmering hymns to southern ladies who sat by their windows, the American master Donald Justice has been American poetry's laureate of something that may look like sentimentality. What other poet in the second half of the twentieth century dared to offers titles like "Nostalgia and Complaint of the Grandparents" and "Nostalgia of the Lakefronts"?

But it would be, in fact, a mistake to see sentimentality in Justice's work. He knew that the Greek roots of the word *nostalgia* are both "homecoming" and "pain," and his poems are clear-eyed and revelatory, with a brilliance of detail, a genuine affection for the foolish, and an acknowledgment of the hurtful in the recollections we wrap about ourselves in tranquility. No one who has read Justice's "In Bertram's Garden," a mere eighteen lines that tell by subtle indirection and metaphor the story of a mean and degrading sexual assault, could ever accuse its creator of willful self-deception. When the deed is done, *that bronze boy* Bertram falls asleep, while his victim Jane must *lie down with others soon / Naked to the naked moon*. The resonant diction of this biblically colored tragedy supplies us with all the pity and horror and tender despair required, as *the purple dark must bruise* the flowers and a statue of Cupid *lose / Eyes and ears and chin and nose*.

Collected Poems
by Donald Justice
Knopf, 286 pp., $25

Donald Justice died on August 6, at age seventy-eight, and his passing leaves a hole in American poetry, for he was, as Anthony Hecht once described him, the "supreme heir of Wallace Stevens." Born in Miami in 1925, he began his college career as a music student before moving to graduate study at the University of North Carolina, Stanford, and the writers' workshop at Iowa, where his classmates included William Dickey, Philip Levine, W.D. Snodgrass, and William Stafford, and his teachers included Robert Lowell, John Berryman, and Karl Shapiro.

His first full collection of poems, *The Summer Anniversaries*, appeared in 1959, his second collection, *Night Light*, in 1967, and his third, *Departures*, in 1973. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1979 for his *Selected Poems*. In 2003, he was invited to become the Library of Congress's poet laureate, but illness prevented him from accepting. And shortly before his death, he saw into publication his *Collected Poems*.

Masterful not only with figurative language, but with comedy, dramatic narrative, witty parody, and all the forms from ballad to sonnet to sestina, Justice ranged over the years from the chilling "Ballad of Charles Starkweather" (a collaboration with Robert Mezey) to the Eastern European wit of a minimalist poem called (appropriately enough) "The Thin Man":

I indulge myself
In rich refusals.
Nothing suffices.

I hone myself to
This edge. Asleep, I
Am a horizon.

The macabre "Tourist from Syracuse" was inspired by a line from the mystery writer John D. MacDonald: "one of those men who can be a car salesman or a tourist from Syracuse or a hired assassin." Justice picked up the suggestive hint to fashion a creepy noir that combines all three occupations to say something about the failures of the deadened human spirit—and all with punning verbs and cheerful despair in the face of existential menace. As the speaker puts it, *Mine is the face which blooms in / The dank mirrors of washrooms / As you grope for the light switch*. His name *is all names and none*, he speaks in the murmur of *crowds which surround / The victims of accidents*, and he stands waiting,

On my usual corner,
The corner at which you turn
To approach that place where now
You must not hope to arrive.

Justice's talent for visual imagination is on display in such work as "My South." His compressive fusion of the concrete with the abstract shows in such poems as "First Death," in which an eight-year-old wonders *how could all her grief / Be squeezed into one small handkerchief*. His lyric tenderness appears in such verse as "To a Ten-Months' Child," which ends with an admonition not to feel tongue-tied and shy:

Well, that's no disgrace.
So might any person
So recently displaced,
Remembering the ocean,
So calm, so lately crossed.

Justice was able to employ the peculiarly Frostian mode of a playfully malevolent nature as redacted by some speaker's solipsistic narrative con-

Len Krisak's three poetry collections are Midland, Even as We Speak, and If Anything.

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sciousness—parodying it perfectly in "A Local Storm":

The danger lies, after all,
In being led to suppose—
With Lear—that the wind dragons
Have been let loose to settle
Some private grudge of heaven's.
Still, how nice for our egos.

In Justice's "The Stray Dog by the Summerhouse," the poignant sympathy evinced is marvelously matched by the skill of the rhymed dimeter as the speaker imagines, of the dead animal, that *because of the tongue / He seemed like one / Who has run too long*. Of the scent of the decaying creature, we learn that *with the heat / [It] Was turning black. / And the scent came back, / And it was sweet*.

One of the many reasons to be grateful for the publication of *Collected Poems* is that it has brought back to view the poet's sonnets. Justice was one of the finest modern practitioners of the form, with "The Wall" and "The Poet at Seven" outstanding by any measure and a dozen others merely wonderful. And then there's "Mrs. Snow," a poem to a childhood music teacher that walks a tightrope between tenderness and a disillusioned awareness:

Busts of the great composers glimmered in niches,
Pale stars. Poor Mrs. Snow, who could forget her,
Calling the time out in that hushed falsetto?
(How early we begin to grasp what kitsch is!)
But when she loomed above us like an alp,
We little towns below could feel her shadow.
Somehow her nods of approval seemed to matter
More than the stray flakes drifting from her scalp.
Her etchings of ruins, her mass-production Mings
Were our first culture: she put us in awe of things.
And once, with her help, I composed a waltz,
Too innocent to be completely false,
Perhaps, but full of marvelous clichés.
She beamed and softened then.
Ah, those were the days.

The appearance of the *Collected Poems* reminds us of just how much we lost when Donald Justice died this month. ♦

House Rules

The checkered history of congressional reform.

BY DAVID LOWE

In America's political vocabulary, no word is more loaded than "reform." But the reform of political institutions is often more about changing who has power than actually making the institutions perform better. By taking on the mantle of reform—and claiming the proposed changes will advance some democratic value like reducing the influence of money in politics or making government officials more accountable—reformers seek the moral high ground that will strengthen what is often a purely partisan agenda.

On Capitol Hill
The Struggle to Reform Congress and Its Consequences, 1948-2000
by Julian E. Zelizer
Cambridge Univ. Press, 359 pp., $30

How Congress Evolves
Social Bases of Institutional Change
by Nelson W. Polsby
Oxford Univ. Press, 257 pp., $29.95

Reform of the judicial system has long been a rallying cry of Republicans, and reform of the campaign finance laws is a banner under which many Democrats have marched. But for both sides—whenever they are out of power, and sometimes even when they are in power but with internal divisions—the reform of congress has been a hardy perennial of American politics.

As it happens, some congressional reforms do strengthen Congress. The Budget Act of 1974, for example, which allowed the House and Senate to gain some measure of control over tax and spending policy. But during the same Congress, an initiative in the House to rationalize outdated committee jurisdictions was torpedoed—because, to a much greater extent than the budget reforms, it infringed on the power of too many members. And many of the members of Congress who led the charge against this proposed reform were the same members who had fought earlier that year to weaken the southern-dominated committee system. Having wrenched the committee and subcommittee chairmanships away from the old guard, they weren't about to give up the positions of power they had just gained.

One can see similar patterns in proposed reforms of the Senate. Unlimited debate has been a favorite target of congressional reformers for much of the twentieth century. The Democrats wanted to eliminate the filibuster when it was a tool favored by southern conservatives to thwart civil-rights legislation. In recent years, however, they've discovered a fondness for the rule of unlimited debate and have taken advantage of it with unprecedented regularity to frustrate the will of the majority. When Majority Leader Bill Frist proposed last fall reforming the rule to allow debate on judicial nominees to be ended by a simple majority (as opposed to the sixty votes required to invoke cloture), his proposal was denounced by many Democrats as a cheap political trick.

Fifty years ago, Congress was an institution largely insulated from public scrutiny, its power held by committees dominated by southern Democrats unresponsive to party leaders, its meetings generally held in closed session, its key votes often unrecorded, and its operations rarely reported by the press. Today, the centers of power in Congress have shifted to party leaders and caucuses, the seniority system has been significantly modified, and

David Lowe is vice president for government and external relations at the National Endowment for Democracy.

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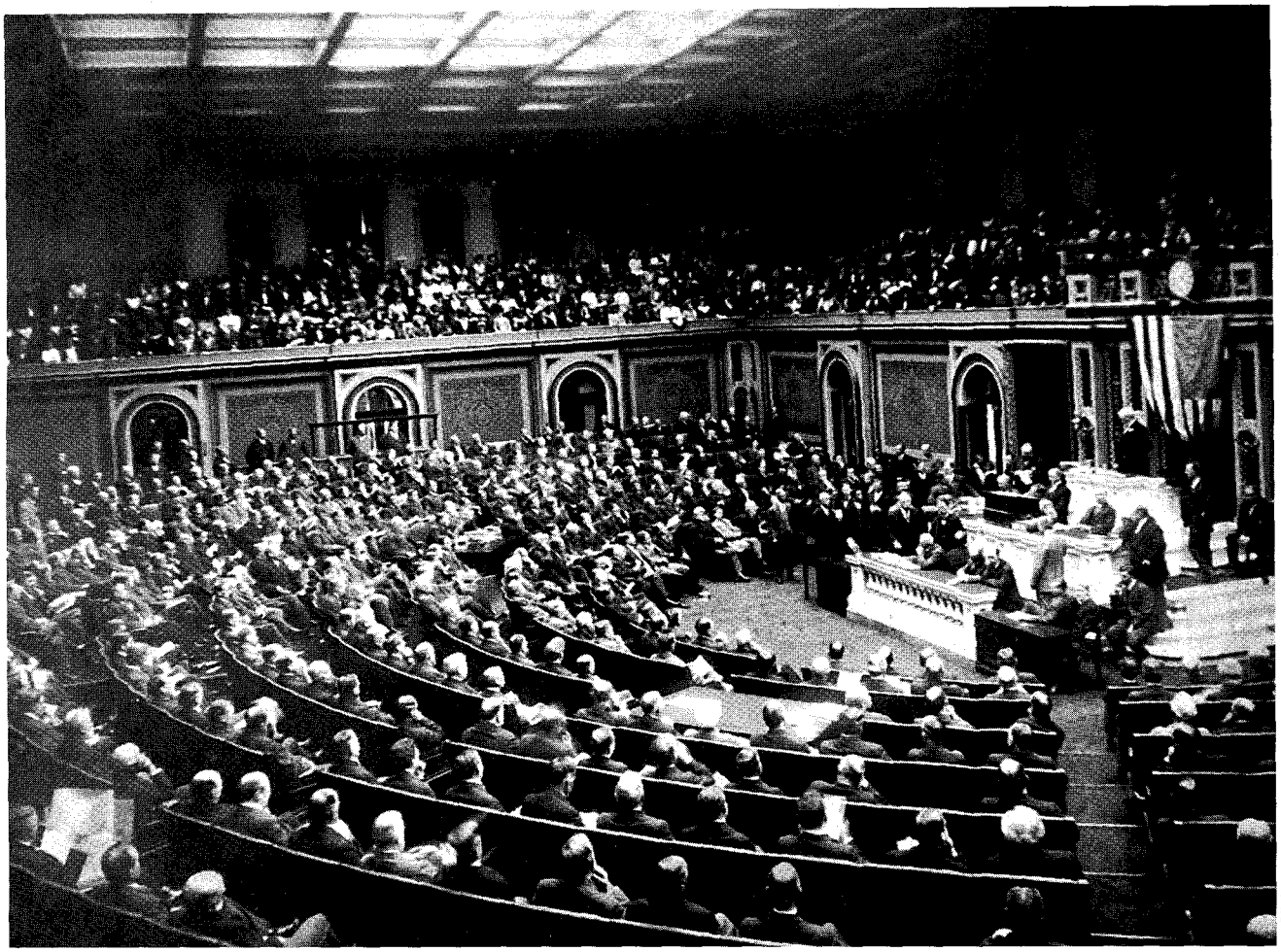

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Congress meets to discuss tariffs in 1910.

congressional business is conducted largely in the open.

According to Julian Zelizer in his new volume *On Capitol Hill: The Struggle to Reform Congress and Its Consequences, 1948-2000*, these changes were the culmination of several waves of institutional reform, begun in the 1950s and driven originally by a group of liberal House Democrats and their allies who favored civil-rights legislation. This group was joined by a "reform coalition" of good-government activists representing the interests of the suburban middle class that came together in the late 1960s under the banner of Common Cause and a number of allied groups.

The reform coalition worked to chip away at the power of committees and their chairmen, helping to set the stage for the dramatic changes that would follow in the wake of the post-Watergate congressional elections of 1974. These included deposing three sitting committee chairmen, pressuring a fourth to resign, weakening the once-powerful House Ways and Means Committee, and making a number of key changes in Senate procedures as well, including opening up most hearings to the public (achieved several years earlier in the House) and lowering the number of votes needed to invoke cloture and terminate debate.

What we tend to forget is that the committee system itself was a reform from the early part of the century, born in rebellion against the autocratic rule of Speaker "Uncle Joe" Cannon. But the diminished autonomy of committees has not meant the return to centralized party control, since the number of decentralizing influences in Congress (including the media's focus on the politics of scandal to help bring down influential legislators) have increased over time. Still, as Zelizer points out, House Republicans were able to turn the party-oriented environment they inherited from the Democrats to their advantage following their return to power in 1994: "After more than a decade of attacking Democrats for using special rules to mishandle the minority, Republicans turned to the same provisions as a way to bury legislation or stifle looming threats to the party agenda from Democrats or uncontrollable Republicans."

Zelizer offers a number of reasons for the fact that, despite several generations of reform, "Congress has not emerged as the dominant branch of government." These include the "growing strength of the president and the courts, and an adversarial news media." But because he fails to distinguish among the various types of reforms, he omits the most obvious explanation, which is that many if not most of them were never aimed at strengthening Congress as an institution in the first place.

Actually, most changes in Congress over time have less to do with specific initiatives from the inside than with changes in the larger political context. Zelizer's study is best when it demonstrates how reforms were made possi-

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ble by such developments as the Supreme Court's reapportionment decisions of the 1960s and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, both of which weakened the hold of the deep South over the Democratic caucuses in both the House and Senate.

In *How Congress Evolves: Social Bases of Institutional Change*, Nelson Polsby argues that the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s can best be understood as the result of a complex series of social and demographic changes that brought the politics of the South into alignment with the rest of the country. Polsby, a veteran observer of America's political institutions, explains how the House of Representatives evolved from the late 1930s, when the coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats first appeared, to today's institution of sharply drawn lines of demarcation between two solidified party caucuses.

His focus is the transformation of the House Democratic caucus from a highly divided and inert body during the leadership of Sam Rayburn (1940 to 1961), who had to use all his considerable political skill to hold it together, into the chief instrument of congressional reform in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This transformation was achieved through the decline in the impact of southern conservatives, a decline brought on by the rise of the Republican party in the South.

Like Zelizer, Polsby acknowledges the importance of the dramatic increase in voter registration following the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which strengthened the liberal factions of the Democratic party and led to the movement out of the party of conservatives and newly registered white voters. But even more important to the rise of the Republicans in the South, Polsby argues, were the changing demographics of the region, resulting, most significantly, from the migration of substantial numbers of northerners following the introduction of air conditioning in the 1950s. A full decade before the passage of the Voting Rights Act, Republicans could already claim a safe seat in St. Petersburg, Florida, previously a resort area during the winter months. This trend would continue from the 1960s on, when "north-to-south migration accelerated the transformation of the South into a region showing greater similarities to other parts of the country with its suburban Republicans and retirees voting according to habits they had picked up in their places of origin."

The growing assertiveness of the Democratic caucus would bring about a corresponding decline not only in the power of committee chairmen but also in the spirit of committee bipartisanship that characterized the work of most of the key committees, including Appropriations and Ways and Means. This decline was the result of the message the new rules conveyed to committee chairmen, namely, that they owed their allegiance not to fellow committee members but rather to the party machinery responsible for installing them in their positions. At the same time, "all but ignored by observers, the Republicans were running a far more ideologically compact and hierarchical operation," with committee assignments dominated by a coalition of senior members from the large state delegations. These developments, Polsby contends, helped set the stage for the intensely partisan battles that have dominated the House for the past twenty years.

Polsby's *How Congress Evolves* is crisply written and argued, moving logically toward an explanation of how Congress changes over time. It should be read by anyone serious about the subject of how political institutions evolve. When put together with Zelizer's *On Capitol Hill*, however, it suggests an interesting picture of congressional reform. In the name of transcending politics—under the banner of institutional improvement—the reform of Congress has been largely about power: who has it, and how the reformers can get that power to achieve their political objectives. In the end, political reform has always been fundamentally about politics. Why isn't that a surprise? ♦

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Czeslaw Milosz, 1911-2004

We drove before dawn through frozen fields, Czeslaw Milosz once wrote.

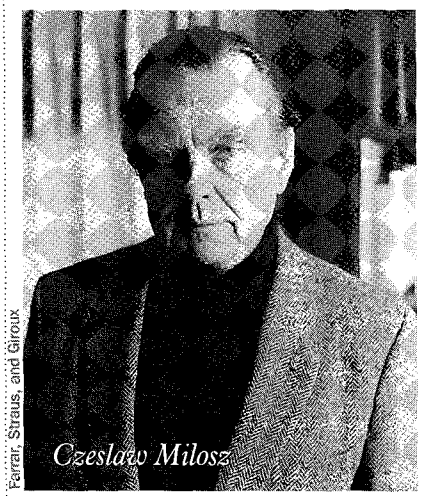
The red wing was rising, yet still the night.
And suddenly a hare shot across our path.
One of us pointed to it with his hand.
That was long ago and both are dead:
The hare and the man who stretched his arm.
O my love, where are they, where do they lead,
The flash of a hand, the line of movement, the swishing icy ground?

Milosz's death this month at age ninety-three could hardly be called early or unexpected. And yet, perhaps because he was most of all a poet of *memory*—of the precise detail, stubbornly held for years against the blind wash of time—his death now seems to me unbearable: a real thing, a good thing, wrenched away, as though a warning that nothing from the past survives. *O my love, where are they, where do they lead, / The flash of a hand, the line of movement, the swishing icy ground?*

Czeslaw Milosz was a miracle: a young man promoted by old aristocratic Poland for his talent and then shunned for his liberalism; an anti-Communist whom the Communists first promoted for his work against the Nazis and then scheduled for destruction; a refugee in Paris who found intellectuals in the free world more consistently Stalinist than intellectuals behind the Iron Curtain; a professor in America who discovered that California is simultaneously the most beautiful place on Earth and the meaningless end of civilization; a poet whose natural inclination was neoclassicism, born in the age of modernism.

Through long years, he thought of himself as a failure: a man destroyed by the attacks of the Soviets in Eastern Europe, the back-biting figures of the French intellectual world, and the uninformed professoriate of America. But his friendship with the archbishop of Kracow—and the archbishop's election as Pope John Paul II—kept him in touch with Polish life, and he became one of the premier promoters of the anti-Communist movement Solidarity.

The Nobel Prize for literature in 1980 brought him recognition even the Communists could not ignore. During a visit to Poland after thirty years of exile, he received a welcome of parades and awards that shocked him. Lech Walesa—another friend—had ordered a line of Milosz's inscribed on the Gdansk memorial for the shipyard


Farrar, Straus, and Giroux

Czeslaw Milosz

workers shot by the Communists: *You who harmed a simple man, do not feel secure, for a poet remembers*. Milosz did not know before his return how important he had been to the oppressed Poles.

Milosz was born June 30, 1911, to the Polish gentry in what is now Lithuania. The publication of his first book when he was twenty-two led to a scholarship to study in Paris. A second book of poems followed in 1937, but the Polish establishment began to turn against him for his liberal view of reform—until the Nazi invasion in 1939. Perhaps his most anthologized poem, "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto," describes life under the Nazis and the destruction of Warsaw. During the war, he worked in a library and wrote for the anti-Nazi underground. It was during this period, as well, that T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* appeared, and, as can be seen in Milosz's first volume after the war, *Rescue*, Eliot taught the Polish poet how to incorporate classical leanings into modern poetry.

Eliot also taught Milosz a way to write serious Christian poetry. "If I were asked to say where my poetry comes from I would say that its roots are in my childhood, in Christmas carols, in the liturgy of Marian and vesper offices, and in the Bible," he later explained. It remains a mystery why the new Communist government appointed him to the diplomatic corps in 1946, but tipped off at the Polish legation in Paris in 1951 that he was to be included in the next round of purges, Milosz refused an order to return to Warsaw and defected. His 1953 prose work *The Captive Mind* examined the lives of intellectuals who sell themselves to totalitarianism.

But poetry remained central. His 1965 anthology *Post-War Polish Poetry* introduced the world to the fact that a golden age of poetry was happening in Polish during the second half of the 20th century. What explanation can there be for this? While every other European poetry was in decline, Poland produced two Nobel Prize winners—Milosz himself and Wislawa Szymborska—and several other major poets, particularly Zbigniew Herbert. Perhaps the explanation is that in Poland, it still *mattered*. Poetry was an aesthetic object with historical consequences, and the Poles still read poetry for its truth: *You who harmed a simple man, do not feel secure, for a poet remembers*.

And now Milosz is gone: a witness, a rememberer. *I imagine the earth when I am no more*, he wrote. *Nothing happens, no loss, it's still a strange pageant, / Women's dresses, dewy lilacs, a song in the valley. / Yet the books will be there on the shelves*.

—*Joseph Bottum*

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Parody

Bush: Swiss Cénacle A 'Kerry Front'

C'EST DOMMAGE, *From A1*

-ferent *Weltanschauung*," Kerry said, denying that the group, known as Swiss Finishing School Docents for Truth, has any formal link to his campaign.

In one of the ads, Bitsy van Rensselaer, who taught wine-tasting to two of Kerry's fencing instructors at Cap d'Antibes in the 1950s, says that in George Bush, Yale has betrayed its own best self. "I was in Italy on the day George Bush referred to Positano as Pensacola," says van Rensselaer. "I don't think anyone who was there will ever forget it. I was humiliated before my sommelier. In a sense it was a betrayal of all that the American people have fought for through their representatives in the Modern Language Association."

In another, Hervé (pr. air-VAY) de Querrí, who since his time at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts has served as ladder-master of the annual tennis tournament of the Montego Bay Polo Club, makes his lament in front of the Matisse Museum. "President Bush was AWOL when we were stretching the frontiers of critical theory at the University of Nanterre," says de Querrí. "When the president admits he was not in Paris in 1968, you almost suspect he's proud of it."

But Bush campaign operatives insist the links are real, and that the group itself ought to worry voters. "Thirty years ago," said President Bush, "I learned an important lesson—the Friends of André Gide are not the friends of ordinary Amer-

See ALLONS ENFANTS, *A13, Col. 1*

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the weekly Standard
AUGUST 30, 2004

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Broadening What's Meant by School

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To be effective, schools serving poor children must do a lot. They can't assume that their children come to first grade knowing that letters make sounds or that older children get family support to do homework. It's not enough to provide coherent and interesting instruction. Schools that serve the disadvantaged must motivate and compensate as well as instruct.

Schools in which children and teachers occupy the same space five hours a day, five days a week can be enough for children who have lots of support. But they aren't enough for children disadvantaged by poverty, violence, or lack of English-language skills.

The most successful schools for poor children keep much longer days (9–12 hours) and include nutritional, health, counseling, and recreational programs designed to compliment instruction.

The value of such an approach may be seen in of the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), developed for middle schools by Teach for America alumni to serve poor Hispanic children, and the Beacons' middle-school network. Religious groups have also created similar schools for poor children. The Jesuits' Nativity schools, for example, provide moral instruction (actions have consequences, what you become is up to you) and organize sports and fun. By adding hours to the school day, they also ensure that students are available for extra tutoring and supervised homework.

If these schools aren't the ultimate solution to the education of poor city children, they are a big step toward it. Unfortunately they are hard to reproduce. They put big burdens on teachers, and they need adults in school for 12 hours each day, not just 5 or 6.

By expanding the meaning of school, KIPP and similar programs also expand the costs. It costs a great deal more money to run a school 9–12 hours a day, rather than 6, and to develop integrated learning-focused approaches to instruction, recreation, and family services. Today, KIPP and similar schools live on donations. Even when they operate as charter schools and receive public funding, such schools must draw as much as one-third of their income from foundations and businesses.

But philanthropic support isn't adequate to reach the millions of city children now in narrowly defined six-hour schools. **We have to find a way to support enlarged schools with public funds.**

The extra money could come from funds normally used to support separate health and social service agencies, which would require a wrenching change in social services. Funds that now sustain separate social service agencies would go instead to schools, such as KIPP, that serve as comprehensive service providers. Schools would then be more like parishes than government agencies, able to draw from a wider array of expertise—and to spend more money—than is available to support their purely instructional roles.

Effective schools for poor children require more money than is available for other schools and more than is in the education budget. But increasing school-specific spending is not necessarily the right answer. We need to make much better use of the funds available for youth services.

—Paul T. Hill

Paul T. Hill is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution; a member of Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education; and a research professor at the University of Washington's Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs.

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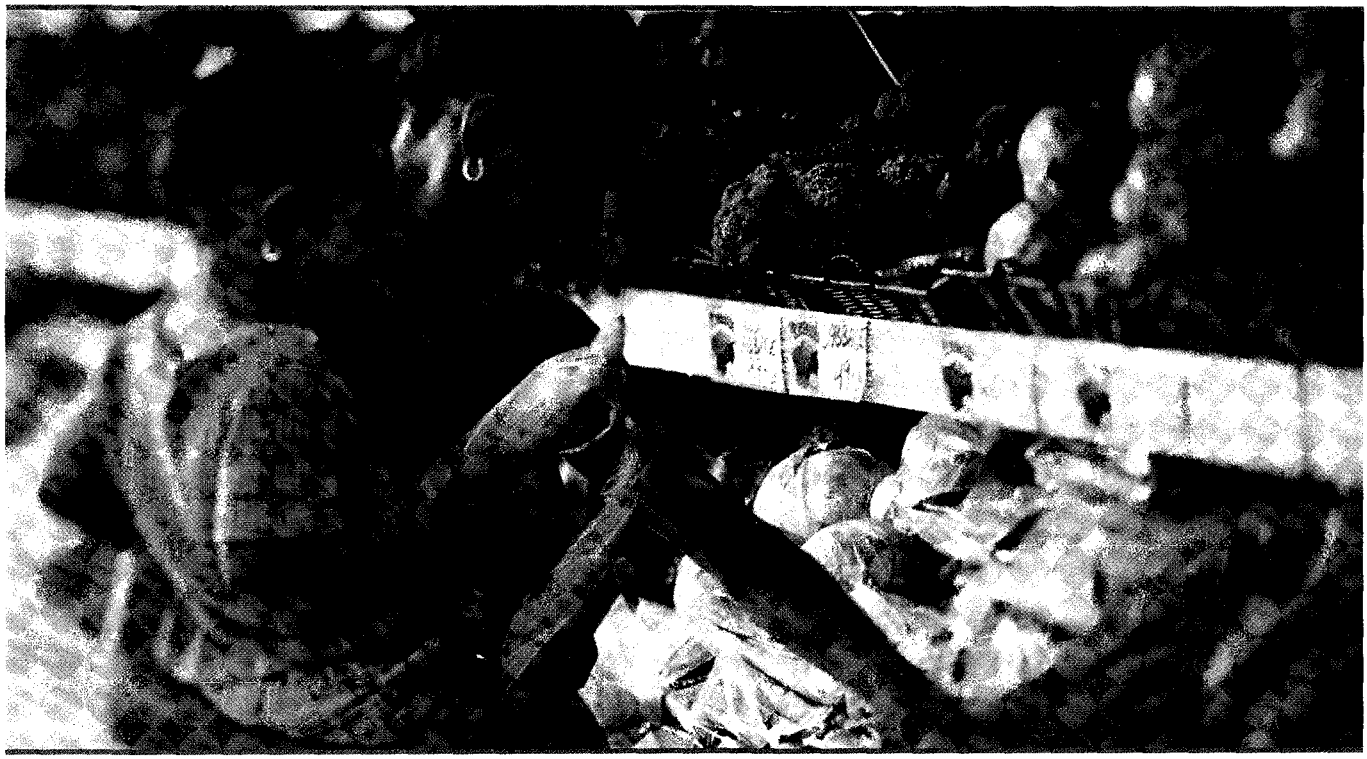

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